

Roar of the African Lion

Chika Onyeani

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In this collection of speeches, newspaper columns and other writings, Chika Onyeani's unblinking gaze and plain speaking are directed at many of the burning issues of the day. He outlines his revolutionary Spider Web Doctrine – aimed at financial self-reliance and the upliftment of black communities – and attacks the parasitic leaders whose greed has robbed the people of Africa of opportunities for advancement and development since their liberation. He is equally scornful of the failures of the African elite to influence the direction of their countries, and has trenchant comments to make about racism, xenophobia and hypocrisy in Africa, America and elsewhere.

Dr Onyeani also tackles the persistence of slavery on the continent, the West's ambivalent attitude to aid and debt relief, rampant corruption and the 'whiteness' of Barack Obama. Looking to the future, he cautions Africa to be wary of China's embrace and to pursue its own solutions to African problems.

ROAR

OF THE AFRICAN

LION

The memorable, controversial
speeches and essays of

CHIKA

ONYEANI

Author of the bestselling

CAPITALIST NIGGER: THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

DELTA PUBLISHERS

CAPE TOWN & JOHANNESBURG

Born in Nigeria, CHIKA ONYEANI is a journalist, editor and former diplomat. He is the author of the bestselling *Capitalist Nigger: The Road to Success*, a manual for the empowerment and regeneration of the Black Race. He is the publisher and editor-in-chief of the award-winning *African Sun Times* newspaper. He lives in New Jersey.

NOBODY OWES BLACKS ANYTHING: TRUTH, HONESTY AND FRANKNESS

In 2000, I was invited to Morgan State University, in Baltimore, Maryland, as the keynote speaker at their Bill of Rights/Trans Africa Convocation, held in the Carl Murphy Fine Arts Auditorium. Dean Burney J Hollis awarded me the Distinguished Achievement Award, for my work as 'International Diplomat, Editor and Author'. This is his introduction to my keynote address.

His Excellency, Dr Chika Onyeani, is a man for all seasons – an international diplomat, a pace-setting journalist and a distinguished author. For over three decades, he has been a pioneer and a pathfinder, a beacon and a trailblazer, and a commander and a mighty warrior. From his current post as editor-in-chief of the African Sun Times and his various stations in the worldwide Pan-African movement, Dr Onyeani has achieved singularity, and honour, as one of Africa's foremost statesmen.

Whether during the 1960s, when he was Nigeria's youngest diplomat and served in diplomatic posts in London, Dublin, Brussels, Paris and New York, or, later, as the founding editor of the African Sun Times, the largest and only weekly African newspaper distributed nationwide in America, or as founding chairman of the United African Congress, the umbrella organisation for all continental Africans in the United States, and as current interim chair of Africans for Democracy, Dr Chika Onyeani has brought to his work an unshakable devotion to truth and to Pan-African unity. He has been a courageous and forthright advocate of excellence and achievement for peoples of African descent around the world, and he issued this year a stentorian call for Black people to rise above being dependent and complacent consumers and become independent, reformed producers – of culture, language, food, clothing, values and economies.

In his landmark publication, *Capitalist Nigger: The Road to Success*, he issues an angry, but compassionate, cry for Black people around the world – especially African leaders – to wake up to the reality of their own enormous potential and become economic warriors in the world. He has penned a historic and ground-breaking economic, political and cultural treatise that, according to one critic, is the 'definitive book on the Black Race that every Black person would like to have written, but didn't have the courage [to write]'.

Over the last three decades, Dr Chika Onyeani has been recognised and applauded across this country – by the media, by the business community, by social and fraternal societies, and by local

governments.

This morning, Morgan adds its name to those around the world who have recognised and praised the good work and the visionary leadership of this man for all seasons. So, I am pleased today, on behalf of our university community, to present to His Excellency, Dr Chika Onyeani, the Morgan State University Distinguished Achievement Award for 2000, in recognition of outstanding contributions to African-American and African and Pan-African history and culture.

My keynote address, entitled 'Nobody Owes Blacks Anything: Truth, Honesty and Frankness, followed Dean Hollis's introduction.

Good morning,

President Earl Richardson, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters. I feel especially honoured to be here today, in this great institution. I must thank Dean Hollis for inviting me to come here today.

In fact, the last time I was in Baltimore was at the Middle-Atlantic Writers Association conference, and I had been invited by Professor Grace Coffey to speak about my book, *Capitalist Nigger: The Road to Success – A Spider Web Doctrine*. My African sister Yahne Sangarey, a member of the African Sun Times staff as well as Curator of the African Museum here in Baltimore, had arranged for me to participate in 'Global African Writers: The Ties that Bind' of the United Nations African Project. The book was well received, and when Dean Hollis offered to bring me here to speak with you, I wasn't sure that his colleagues would have the courage to agree with his selection of an author of such a controversial book and viewpoint. The fact that I am here today is a testimony to the courage and progressive thinking of the members of this institution. I thank you all, and especially Dean Hollis for his bold initiative.

A lot of times when we present our polished resumés, we forget to mention the humble environment we come from. Of course, I am no exception. But I would be remiss if I didn't tell you a little bit about myself other than what is in my resumé. I come from Ohafia, a warrior group of the Igbo national group in Nigeria. It is in a very remote area of the country. When I was growing up, we attended school in makeshift mud huts. Then, as today, we didn't have running water, and now the electricity we have hardly works one day in a month. For most of us, books were a luxury, but when we got hold of one we made sure that we knew what was in it to pass our exams and move to the next class. In fact, I am exceptionally lucky because I was one of those who hardly had books, even exercise books – what you call notebooks here – not because my parents did not provide the money for them, but because of my uncle's partiality to my cousin,

who started school with me.

Needless to say, my cousin was three classes behind me when we finished, and even then I had set a goal of becoming somebody. I gave you that very short resumé just to say that, no matter wherever you come from, or from whatever circumstances, you can achieve whatever goal you set your mind on. And, looking at you all, I know you are all very special and goal-oriented; otherwise you would not be sitting where you are now. Thousands of others have abandoned their goals even before they started. I applaud you all.

My topic today is the Black Race. It is not about Africans from the continent, or Africans in the diaspora, or African West Indians, but about the Black Race. My discussion is about truth; it is about honesty and frankness. It is about no more lies, no more hiding the truth, and no more blaming others for what is happening to the Black Race. It is about accepting responsibility for our actions; it is about playing the same games that others are playing and becoming very successful.

It is about being intelligent about how we make decisions on where to spend our hard-earned money. It is about no more playing the blame game, and the victim-mentality game. In this 21st century, we have to accept the truth of our situation, and nothing but the truth, so help us God. There is nobody more qualified to debate the state of the Black Race versus others than you and I. We cannot, as usual, in our lackadaisical manner, abandon this debate to others with better access to the media.

In Africa, we have a saying: 'When a child grows up, and he is able to wash his hands, he should sit at the same table and eat with his elders.'

The Black Race has grown up; we have washed our hands, but the question is: why are we not sitting at the same table to eat with our elders? Why are we not even sitting at the same table with other races to eat from the same table. Why are we still eating from the floor?

We have another saying in Africa: 'You don't need a mirror to look at what you are wearing on your wrist.' You see, you can look at your wrist and see clearly what you are wearing. You don't need a mirror to tell you what time it is or what kind of jewellery you are wearing.

But, unfortunately, we as a people, the Black Race, prefer to look at what we are wearing on our wrist with a mirror. Just try it, and you will see why we have a much-distorted image of our situation.

We are afraid of looking at the truth. We prefer the fuzzy image. We know the truth, but we don't want to talk about it. Yes, we say to ourselves, we cannot wash our dirty linen in public; we cannot talk about the truth of our situation, because white people are going to seize that as a weapon against us. We believe that they will say, 'You

see, even the Blacks themselves are saying what we have been saying all along. They are lazy, they are non-productive, they can't govern themselves, they are unruly, etc., etc.' Well, let me tell you the facts of life. That era of our not looking the truth in the face is dead and gone.

This is the 21st century, and I am happy that there is a group of Blacks all over the world who believe that we, just like the Jews and others, must begin to wash our so-called dirty linen in public. Again, where I come from, there is another saying that 'you don't chase after a mouse when your house is on fire'. Just take a second to digest that statement. Because you know what would happen if you started chasing after the mouse when the house was on fire. You would perish and the mouse would escape. I am telling you that the Black Race is like an inferno; we shouldn't be chasing after a mouse. What we need is water, no, we need a whole ocean, to put out the inferno.

The word 'ruthless' is regarded as a negative when used to describe somebody's actions. But, to me, it is a very positive word.

And that is why I decided to be ruthlessly frank about the Black Race in my book, *Capitalist Nigger: The Road to Success*. No more hiding what people would say about us. Their opinion is irrelevant and meaningless.

Our situation is critical, and we need drastic action if we are to begin to discover and cure the seemingly insurmountable virus devouring our organs of life. The first bitter truth we have to accept, as I charged in my book, is that the Black Race as now constituted, though as endowed as the others, is a non-productive race. We have to accept the fact that the Black Race basically is a consumer race, depending on other communities for our culture, our language, our feeding and our clothing.

And despite our abundance of natural resources, we are economic slaves because we lack the 'killer instinct' and 'devil-may-care attitude' of the Caucasian and the 'spider web economic mentality' of the Asian. The Black Race is the most hospitable race of people I have ever seen. We have no difficulty throwing out our own brothers or sisters just to accommodate any other race other than our own. We would rather be poor – let our guests be comfortable.

But let me be totally sincere with you here. I am tired of a people who have one mindset, and who complain and whine about what others do to us. We complain and complain and whine and whine ad nauseam about what others have done to us and are still doing to us. We think the world owes us something. I am sorry to say that we are delusional. Nobody owes us a thing. Nobody is willing to give up what they have, on the excuse that we want it. If you want something, you have to go out and get it. You cannot continue to beg for manna to fall from heaven, my brothers and sisters.

Most African countries have been independent for more than forty years. The promise of independence is yet to be fulfilled. We thought that manna would fall from heaven. But, instead, what we have in Africa are wars, famine, disease, military dictatorships and human rights abuses. We have despotic leaders who prefer to loot the people's treasuries for their own personal aggrandisement, leaders who prefer to force the adulation of the masses through the barrel of a gun rather than through the provision of simple amenities – like good roads, health care facilities and good environments for learning and opportunities for employment.

My brothers and sisters, I feel sad letting you know that Africa is worse off today than when the colonial masters left. Everything we use in Africa is imported. Do you know that we even still import candles from Taiwan?

Yet, more than forty years after independence, we still blame our colonial masters for everything that happens in Africa today. Our leaders are not man enough to accept responsibility for the abject poverty of our people. We accuse Europeans of plundering and pillaging the natural resources of Africa. But, tell me, who is inviting them to do this? Are they not our own people?

I am sure you have all heard of tyrants and dictators like Sani Abacha of Nigeria and Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaïre (now the Democratic Republic of Congo). Abacha stole more than \$5 billion from the impoverished treasury of Nigeria and took that money and deposited it in Swiss bank accounts. Since his death, the Swiss authorities have 'found' only \$1.5 billion of that money. For his part, Mobutu Sese Seko took \$6 billion to the same Swiss banks. After he died, the Swiss told us that they had found only \$7 million of that money. Tell me, which white man left Europe and put a gun to their heads and forced them to steal \$12 billion from a continent where the per capita income is less than \$500 per year? Do you know what \$12 billion could have done for the starving and disease-prone children in those countries?

No, we cannot continue to accuse white people for everything happening to us. At a certain point in time, we have to sit back, look in the mirror and see the culprit of our misfortune. It is not the white, the red, the green, the yellow or any other colour. We are responsible for what is happening to us today.

As Capitalist Nigger has charged, the Black Race is drowning in the blame and victim-mentality game. We have three things we now wear as body armour: slavery, colonialism and racism. We use these as excuses for our failures. We blame all our failures on these three factors. In Africa, we blame everything on colonialism and racism. In the Western world, especially in America, we blame everything on

slavery and racism. We have allowed these three factors to envelop us as a people. They are attached to us, as the bee is attached to the honey.

When African leaders squander the people's money in buying up palaces in Europe, rather than building infrastructure in their countries, and the masses revolt, they blame the former colonial masters. When, in this country, we allow others to come into our neighbourhoods and buy up our businesses because we are stupid enough not to patronise our own people, we blame it on racism, forgetting that those who came into our neighbourhood started with almost nothing. But, through our generosity and patronage, they become rich, and then turn around and insult and disrespect us.

It is your fault, and it is mine as well. As I said in my book, we are not even intelligent consumers. Why? Because we believe that the more we are insulted and disrespected, the more respectable the people doing the insulting, and the more we should patronise them.

Let me give you two examples. In the US, we as a people spend approximately \$40 million a day eating Chinese food. That is \$40 million a day, and that comes to about \$15 billion a year. That's what we give to a community that disrespects and insults us, and treats us like dogs.

In most of our communities where there are Chinese restaurants, they erect these barriers between themselves and us, and pass our purchases through a hole as if they are passing food to a savage dog. Yes, we all love Chinese food – it is also cheap. But is it better to be investing \$15 billion a year in a community that treats you like a dog?

In economic terms, using the economic multiplier effect, we are actually investing \$120 billion a year into the Chinese community, and inversely taking that much money out of our own community. No wonder their children go to the best schools, and they live in the best neighbourhoods; we cannot curb our taste and our laziness to cook for ourselves. Listen, I am not advocating that we should boycott Chinese food, but I am saying there should be a tit for tat. There should be reciprocity. And, for all the billions we give to the Chinese community, they don't even employ one Black person in their establishments. I ask you, is that an intelligent way to spend our hard-earned money from the menial jobs that are left for us? I believe not. As I said earlier, the more we are insulted, the more we gravitate to and patronise the people doing the insulting. Let's take the Japanese for instance. Two of their prime ministers, at different times, a few years apart, publicly stated that Blacks are inferior. Mind you, the prime minister is, like the President of the United States, the leader of the Japanese people. Just imagine if these leaders said publicly what the Japanese really think about us. Yes, true to form, we protested

their calling us inferior. We hollered, and made them make some kind of feeble apology. But what do we do in retaliation for the Japanese insulting us? We reward them by purchasing \$80 billion worth of their goods a year.

But while we are happily dishing out the little we don't have, the Asians have perfected what I call the Spider Web Economic Doctrine, which is a highly effective system of achieving economic power. Of course, I am sure you all know what a spider does. When it spins its silk, any fly that tries to enter its web is caught and never able to escape.

It is the same thing that happens in the Asian community. So, in my Spider Web Economic Doctrine, when a dollar enters a community, it does not escape from that community. It circulates within that community, and that is where truly what economists call the 'multiplier effect' is classically practised. Asians, especially Indians, are the greatest practitioners of the Spider Web Economic Doctrine. When a dollar comes into their community, it doesn't leave. It circulates within their community, because the Indians believe in patronising one another. They don't eat other people's food. They eat theirs. Their women hardly wear anything other than clothes made in India, and even the suits their men wear are made in India. The Indians, and other Asians, will travel hundreds of miles to patronise one another. Let me tell you what this has done for the Indian community in America. When they arrived in New York, long after continental Africans, they bought one newsstand in New York City, and eventually took over all the major newsstands in the city, including Grand Central Station, Penn Station and the Port Authority Bus Terminal. You have to pay them \$3 000 just to get your newspaper into these locations. From here, the Indians set their eyes on the taxi and limousine industry of the city. They took over 90 per cent of the medallions (indicating yellow taxis), and now control most of the taxi and limousine services in the city. From there, they set their eyes on the motel business. As has been covered by the New York Times, Wall Street Journal and Washington Post, and in Newsweek, Forbes and Fortune magazines, and a plethora of television network newscasts, the Indians control over 85 per cent of the motel business in America. According to the same sources, they are now poised to take over most major five-star hotels. In Silicon Valley, as has been well chronicled, Indians control more than 750 high-tech companies, with the result that several Indians are now billionaires. And they are using their wealth to create incubators in universities throughout India and Pakistan to train future leaders in the high-tech age, for even now more than 50 per cent of the professional visas awarded by the United States each year are given to

Indians. India, which got its independence barely nine years before African countries, possesses nuclear power and exports a great deal to Africa.

The Spider Web economic mentality of the Asians has brought them enormous wealth and respect, and has insulated them from the idiotic vagaries of the white man. It is the only economic doctrine, I believe, that is capable of rescuing us from the abyss of our present economic doldrums.

Unfortunately, you and I, as a people, have always believed that whatever a Black man produces must be inferior. It is ingrained in us. We may not be conscious of it, but we believe it nevertheless. For example, if we were to have two people, one Black and one white, open a store offering the same quality of goods and service, we would not patronise the Black store; rather, we would go to the white person's store, because we believe it is offering a superior product and service – just because of the colour of their skin.

You can't pretend you don't do it. You do it, and I do it. It is even reflected in how we see our professionals. Just go to doctors' offices. When you go to a Black doctor's office, all you see are Black faces. But, on the other hand, go to a white doctor's office, and what do you see but Black faces more numerous than even white faces.

The Black Race must abandon its current path to oblivion and total annihilation, its current practice of wearing its success on its sleeve. As I said earlier, you don't chase after a mouse when your house is on fire. We prefer to run before we can walk, and prefer the best things in life, when we hardly have a penny in our bank accounts. We prefer the Lexus or the Mercedes-Benz, or buying a \$300 pair of sneakers for our primary school children, when we haven't put one dollar into their education fund. Rather than provide simple amenities to the people, African leaders prefer to buy palaces in Europe, spend \$10 000 a night at five-star hotels and ride in luxurious limousines. Unfortunately, Africa owes the world more than \$375 billion, and there is no place in Africa you could point to as evidence of that money being used. That \$375 billion translates to \$5 000 to pay back for every African. In fact, you have more Mercedes-Benzes in Africa than in Germany itself.

My brothers and sisters, my message to you today is that I want the younger generation of the Black Race to understand that they cannot carry the same baggage the older generation has carried for so long: the notion that somebody owes us something.

Let me be ruthlessly frank with you, my friends: nobody owes you anything. Don't carry our baggage of whining, complaining and begging.

Nobody is willing to give up what they have. This world is about

survival of the fittest. If you want something you have got to get up and get it. We must develop the same Spider Web economic mentality of the Asians, and the killer instinct and devil-may-care attitude of the Caucasian.

As I rightly observed in my book, we are as endowed as any other race of people. We have to believe in ourselves. We have to believe in solving our problems ourselves. We cannot continue to depend on others to do everything for us. We have to become intelligent consumers; we need to become a productive race. We must become economic warriors. Like the general who led his men into enemy territory, we must destroy the transport that brought us here. We must fight our way to victory or perish.

Let me honestly say this to you, my brothers and sisters: self-preservation is not a sin. Look at the person next to you. We must think of ourselves as superior individuals. There is nothing inferior about you or me. We must adopt the Spider Web economic mentality: we must trap the dollars that come into our community so that they can circulate within us.

If you and I were to be charged in the court of public opinion, we would all be shot for the serious economic crimes we have committed against the Black Race. We must atone for our sins. Therefore, when you leave here today, resolve to buy Black; it is a dynamic virtue.

We must stop wallowing in the faeces of slavery, colonialism and racism. For me, the stench is too much, and I am getting out. I hope you will join me in getting out and breathing in the fresh air of ruthless honesty, truth, freedom and the stupendous economic prosperity before us.

My advice to you is this: don't buy Capitalist Nigger: The Road to Success if you are not willing to face the truth. It is a bitter brew to swallow, but it is painfully uplifting.

Once again, I thank this great institution for asking me to speak on this great occasion. I have been highly honoured and humbled.

Thank you.

THE SPIDER WEB DOCTRINE

In 2005, the Financial Mail was searching for a suitable individual to be keynote speaker at the launch of The Little Black Book, a publication profiling the top 50 leaders of industry and 500 young professional Black heavy hitters in South Africa. The launch was held at the Sandton Convention Centre, in Johannesburg.

One of the senior managers at the Financial Mail, in a meeting to discuss whom they should invite, suggested the author of Capitalist Nigger, and there was a chorus of agreement. They contracted the search to Rose Francis, then an events organiser, who eventually was able to reach me and made the necessary arrangements for me to be the keynote speaker, not only at Johannesburg but also in Durban and Cape Town.

This is an edited version of my speech, which was entitled ‘The Spider Web Doctrine: A Proven System to Drive the African Economy to its Next Level’.

Your Excellencies, honoured guests, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, good evening. I would have loved to greet you in an African language, but I will stick with English because with us Africans, everywhere, we always have too many dialects. So, again, I say good evening.

On an occasion like this, the speaker is supposed to tell a joke to break the ice, although I have been told it is really for the speaker’s nervousness. My joke here is that I don’t have a joke to tell, except if you consider this a joke: three president-for-life African leaders were attending one of those meetings they normally attend. After a day of patting one another on the back for their achievements, the three retired to one of the huge, expensive penthouses reserved for them. They started comparing notes on how they loot the treasuries of their respective countries. The first one said, ‘Well, here is what I do. At the end of the day, I ask the finance minister to collect all the hard currency that came into the country that day. I ask them to put all the money in a big basket. Then I draw a huge circle on the ground. I ask them to throw the money up. Whatever falls within the circle belongs to me, and whatever falls outside the circle belongs to the people.’ The other president said, ‘Yes, yes, that’s exactly how I do it, except in my case I make a very small circle and whatever falls outside the circle belongs to me, and whatever falls within the circle belongs to the people.’ But the third president, with his dark glasses and all kinds of epaulettes on his shoulders – of course, we know who we are talking about – said to the other presidents, pompously: ‘You are all stupid,

you don't know how to do it.' The other two presidents protested, 'You can't call us stupid, we are presidents just like you. Okay, if you are so wise, how do you do it differently?' 'Well,' he said, 'the first part, of asking the finance minister to bring all the hard currency, is also what I do. But here is how my method is a lot better than all yours. When I ask them to throw the money up, I say to them that whatever remains up belongs to the people and whatever falls on the ground belongs to me.'

Rather a sad joke, but how true indeed, when you know the billions that these kinds of individuals have siphoned off from Africa and deposited in Swiss bank accounts, never to be found and returned to us after their deaths. Here's even better news to cheer you up. According to press reports, the so-called debt relief for Africa by the G8 countries is unravelling due to some European countries' unhappiness with the deal, and we have discovered that there was trickery in the accounting. Rather than the \$20 billion per year that was bandied about, we have come to learn that the actual amount is less than \$10 billion. But here's the kicker: \$10 billion is laundered annually from West Africa alone to European banks, and Nigeria accounts for \$7 billion of that amount. A Nigerian governor was recently arrested by the London Metropolitan Police, which allegedly found £1 million cash in his residence. You know what? Instead of the citizens of his state expressing outrage at the theft of their treasury, they are rallying around the governor. Go figure. We get a pledge of \$10 billion from the G8 countries, but quickly launder back \$10 billion just from one region in Africa. Amazing!

Seriously, I am more than honoured to be within this elite group of achievers, and I must thank the organisers for giving me this opportunity to be the speaker this evening. I am deeply humbled. When a friend of mine, Dr Joe Okpaku – I am sure you remember him as the keynote speaker last year – called me one day out of the blue and said to me, 'Chika, why is it that everywhere I go all over the world, I hear your name being mentioned, and, moreover, why are you following me all over the place?' I said to him, 'Joe, I haven't seen you for a long time, so how could I be following you, except these days we seem to meet at diplomatic events.' He replied, 'Well, everywhere I go, I hear about Capitalist Nigger, and now a very good friend of mine who you might have met a long time ago, just called me and wants you to follow me to be the keynote speaker of the second launch of The Little Black Book.' And that very good friend of Joe's is none other than the great Ms Rose Francis, an indefatigable lady of immense capacity and accomplishment. I want you to join me in acknowledging Ms Francis for her accomplishments and for being responsible for my presence here today. And I want also to

acknowledge you, the achievers, who are assembled here this evening, because without you I wouldn't be here either. (Please give yourselves a hand.) And I want to thank the staff of the Financial Mail for footing the bill and making it possible for me to be here today. I say, thank you all.

Okay, that's the end of the niceties. Now, let's get down to the serious business of why I have been asked to be here today, the topic being 'The Spider Web Doctrine: Engaging Young Black South Africans with Employing the Psyche Necessary to Become Economic Warriors in the New South Africa'. But before I get to this, let me digress a little.

TRUTH, HONESTY AND FRANKNESS: NOBODY OWES THE BLACK RACE ANYTHING

One thing I must tell you right up front is that you, the young people, must never carry the baggage that my generation of Africans is trying to unload on you. Normally, it is said that a son who learns and resembles his father is a good thing. But let me tell you that it would be suicidal for you to do that. Why? Because my generation of Africans has been a disgrace to the memory of a race that is the cradle of humanity, a race that brought civilisation to the world, a race in a continent that possesses a greater percentage of the world's natural resources. If you see us coming, please, I plead, take the other way.

In a keynote address I gave at Morgan State University, one of the premier Black universities in the US, the theme of my discussion was 'Truth, Honesty and Frankness', with the subtitle 'Nobody Owes Blacks Anything'. And in an article, titled 'Black Race in the 21st Century – The Imperative of Truth', I charged that, in this 21st century, it is time that the Black Race started being truthful, honest and frank with itself. We should stop all these lies we tell ourselves, we should stop hiding the truth, and we should stop blaming others for what is happening to the Black Race.

Where I come from in Igboland, Nigeria, we have a saying that 'when a child grows up, and he is able to wash his hands, he should sit at the same table and eat with his elders'. The Black Race has grown up, we have washed our hands, but the question is why are we not sitting at the same table to eat with our elders, in this case, why are we not sitting at the same table with other races to eat from the same table, why are we still eating from the floor?

Again, we have another saying that 'you don't need a mirror to look at what you are wearing on your wrist'. You see, you can look at your wrist and see clearly what you are wearing. You don't need a mirror to tell you what time it is or to know what kind of jewellery you are wearing. But unfortunately, we as a people, the Black Race, prefer to look at what we are wearing on our wrist with a mirror. Just

try it, and you will see why we have a much-distorted image of our situation. We are afraid of looking at the truth. We prefer the fuzzy image. We know the truth, but we don't want to talk about it. Yes, we say to ourselves, we should not wash our dirty linen in public; we should not talk about the truth of our situation, because white people are going to seize that as a weapon against us. We believe that they would say, you see even the Blacks themselves are saying what we have been saying all along. 'They are lazy, they are non-productive, they can't govern themselves, they are unruly, etc., etc.' Well, let me tell you the facts of life. That era, of our not looking the truth in the face, is dead and gone.

This is the 21st century, and luckily for us there is group of Black writers and leaders who believe, just like the Jews and others, that we must begin to wash our so-called dirty linen in public, otherwise the wound will continue to fester, attracting more maggots.

As I implored you, when you see a member of my generation coming your way, take the other side of the street. (Not with me, though!) You don't want to be infected by the same diseases that we have been suffering from in the last 48 years, since the first African nation gained independence from our colonial masters. You need to start with a clean slate. If I start to enumerate the diseases, we would not get out of here for another 48 hours.

I wish to be totally sincere with you here. I have been told that I shouldn't be expressing disappointment at my people for having one mindset, complaining and whining all the time about who did this and that to them; we complain and complain ad infinitum ad nauseam. We believe the world owes us something. Well, I am sorry to say that that is a delusional mindset. Nobody owes us anything. Nobody is willing to give us what they have, on the excuse that we want it. If you want something, you have to go out and get it. You cannot continue to beg for manna to fall from heaven, my brothers and sisters. You know what? Manna never falls from heaven.

We trust the white man to have the compassion to know that he has done wrong by us, and that he should correct those wrongs. In fact, this reminds me of the story of the snake that said it couldn't swim. Can you imagine? At the edge of the stream, the snake moved around and around until it saw a man crossing the stream. The snake said to him, 'Please could you help carry me across the stream. I can't swim.' The man replied, 'No, I can't, because you will bite me and I will die.' After a lot of begging by the snake, the man relented and picked up the snake and put it in his pocket. Immediately after he crossed the stream, the snake bit him. As the man expressed surprise and protested that the snake had reneged on its promise, the snake bit him again. As the man sat dying, he asked the snake why it had bitten

him and then bit him a second time. The snake replied, 'The first time is for knowing that I am a snake and yet you still agreed to carry me. And I bit you the second time for your sheer stupidity.' When you think about slavery, colonialism and racism, don't these remind you of the relationship between Black and white?

THE SPIDER WEB ECONOMIC DOCTRINE

I want to warn from the onset of this part of the discourse that what I am saying here should not be construed as an invitation for xenophobic feelings towards the achievements of the groups I have mentioned here. Instead, I want us to learn from their experiences. I am not saying this for the people to become objects of hatred, but rather of admiration. And these are the groups of people who don't believe in manna falling from heaven: the Indians and the Chinese, in fact the Asian peoples as a whole.

Let me tell you what would happen today if an Indian were to arrive in America. For example, let's assume he flies into John F Kennedy International Airport in New York. This man doesn't know a thing about America. He can't even speak English well. You know what would happen? Well, he could start work immediately, without even leaving the airport. How? you may ask. Legitimate question. I am sure most of you have travelled outside South Africa. When you go to any US airport these days, you'll notice a lot of newsstands – mostly called Hudson News. Sometimes, there are several in one airport; in fact, there are some airports where you have more than ten of these Hudson newsstands. They sell not only newspapers, magazines and books but also candies, water, Coke and other articles that are convenient for the traveller. And this news group is owned by Indians. Our Indian arriving at JFK doesn't have to understand English, but he must know how to count the money and give people change. He doesn't need to interact verbally with the customers. They pick up whatever they want and bring it back to him for payment, or he could work in the back room, replenishing stock that has been depleted.

Here is how it gets even more interesting. If the new arrival doesn't fancy doing this type of work, he could leave the airport and stop at the first petrol station. He could immediately start work here as well, pumping petrol. The only requirement for the new arrival is the ability to count money and make change. Again, he can do this because the Indians own the petrol stations. But the man hates petrol stations and he hates the smell of petrol. So he asks one of the Indian taxi drivers to take him to the city.

He could ask the driver to take him to one of the motels (small, inexpensive hotels). There, if he can speak a modicum of English, he could go behind the counter and start checking people in. Or he could be put to work cleaning the rooms and changing the beds, or he could

just be asked to wash the dirty linen.

These are not the only opportunities open to this recent arrival in America. If he can drive, he could be put to work immediately, driving one of the thousands of medallion taxis owned by Indians or working for a limousine service, or he could just work in the offices of these companies. We are not even talking of the thousands of stores owned by Indians across the United States.

Let me give you these statistics, according to the New York Times and Washington Post, as well as Forbes, Fortune, Time and Newsweek magazines, because all of them have done research on the success phenomenon of the Indian community in America: 78 per cent of all motels in America are owned by Indians; 68 per cent of all petrol stations are owned by Indians; and 12 per cent of four-star hotels are owned by Indians.

At one point, former President Bill Clinton expressed surprise that Indians controlled 700 companies in Silicon Valley. Financially, some of the largest equity funds and the largest venture capital funds in the world are managed by Indians. At this time, Americans are crying about the outsourcing of professional jobs. To where? To India, of course. India generates about \$30 billion in income from this outsourcing of jobs from America, because their entrepreneurs have returned to India to set up companies to compete directly with America, offering better services at much lower costs.

How did this Indian miracle occur? Well, it started in New York City with the purchase of one newspaper newsstand, and before you knew it they had bought up most of the newsstands in New York City. The biggest remaining company, Hudson News, was owned by a Jewish family. The Indians bought out the Jewish family. From there, they set their sights on the taxi and limousine business in New York. The cost of a medallion (taxi permit) now in New York City is more than \$300 000, and yet the Indians own more than 80 per cent of the city's taxi and limousine services. From there, they expanded into motels, petrol stations and other businesses that don't depend on people's emotions but are basic necessities.

According to the 2000 US Census, there are 1.8 million Indians in America, and there are 2.9 million Africans (excluding North Africans, since they are counted as whites). According to the same census, the African immigrant group is the most educated group, with 43.8 per cent finishing college, as against their Asian counterpart of 42.5 per cent. In advanced degrees, Africans do even better, with 8.2 per cent as against 6.8 per cent for Asians. When it comes to income, the average income for an American family is \$46 000, for the Asian \$56 000 and for the African \$45 000.

You can look at these statistics and ask, what is the problem? It

seems Africans are doing as well as, or even better than, most Americans. That is not the question you should be asking; the question you should be asking is why the Indians have control of the motel, airport store, petrol station, taxi and limousine businesses. That is the question you should be asking.

My answer is what I have come to christen the Spider Web Economic Doctrine of the Asians in general, and the Indians in particular. You see, after I discovered the data of what is going on – it is an ongoing phenomenon, I have no doubt, even here in South Africa – I decided to carry out more studies of the Indian community. What I discovered led me to christen their huge economy a miracle, but a miracle with a difference, which could only be explained by the way the Indians interact with one another. Their way of life is akin to a spider web mentality. What do I mean by this?

Well, we all know what a spider does. It weaves its silk, and waits for that lone fly to come across its web. The unfortunate lone fly goes into the web, and we know what happens after that – the fly is unable to extricate itself. The spider grabs the fly and eats it. When you expand this to economic theory, you begin to understand why the Indians have become one of the most successful groups everywhere they have settled throughout the world – in Britain, the United States or any other part of the world. Let me show you how the spider web theory relates to the Indian economic miracle.

Expounding on the Spider Web doctrine, when a dollar – in this case, since we are in South Africa, a rand – comes into an Indian community, just like the spider web, the community traps the dollar, and doesn't allow it to leave their community; they devour it within themselves. Now, we know in economic terms what a dollar or rand is worth when it comes into a community. Through the process of what economists call the multiplier effect, this dollar or rand eventually becomes \$10, or R100 if you wish, which will have the same effect when another community loses a dollar or rand; it is actually losing \$10 or R100.

Of course, other communities practise what the Indians practise, except that the Indians have perfected the Spider Web Economic Doctrine to a greater degree. When that dollar comes into their community, rather than going outside to spend the money to buy from other communities, the Indians spend their money buying from themselves. The money circulates within their community because they patronise one another. An Indian would travel more than a hundred kilometres so that he/she could buy from another Indian. Just imagine where you continue to take from others, without giving back to them in any form or shape?

People often make fun of the Indians: they live five to ten in a

room; they wear ill-fitting suits made in India; their women only wear saris; they eat only their curried food; and they speak English shaking their heads. But you know what? The suits, shirts, ties and shoes they wear are all made in India; the saris are of course made in India; and by eating their own 'curried food', they don't have to spend their hard-earned money eating other people's foods. Listen, if left to the Indians, McDonald's would not be the behemoth it is today. They even make their own cars, and have nuclear capability. So what, I ask, so what?

Compared to us, what do you get? We are basically a consumer race. In my book, *Capitalist Nigger: The Road to Success*, which most people said they have read, I charged that the 'Negroid Race, as naturally endowed as any other, is culpably a non-productive race. The Black Race is a consumer race and depends on other communities for its culture, its language, its feeding, and its clothing. Despite enormous natural resources, Blacks are economic slaves because they lack the "devil-may-care" attitude and the "killer instinct" of the Caucasian, as well as the spider web economic mentality of the Asian.' I have been accused of depicting Africans as, 'non-productive, lazy, unintelligent, slaves, Neanderthals, zombies, intellectually dishonest, beggars, undisciplined, dumb-assed idiots, genetically unable to take care of themselves, etc.' I say, for those for whom the shoes fit let them wear them; I make no apologies. And I have also been accused of being angry. If you know what is going on within the Black Race, I ask you, why wouldn't you be angry?

Yes, why wouldn't you be angry when you know that before a dollar comes into our community, we have already spent it? I am sure you would say, 'Man, you are talking about Blacks in America. Things are different there.' I say, is that so? Let me see, the last time I checked, the annual income of Black America would be the seventh largest in the world, at \$850 billion, edging out even Canada. But only \$50 billion comes back to the Black community as revenue. On the other hand, Africa possesses the largest percentage of the world's natural resources, but Africa is the poorest continent in the world. Despite so-called debt relief, Africa still owes more than \$300 billion because we continue to have leaders who are more interested in grandiose living than in employing our resources for the benefit of our people. There is a perception on the part of Africans that they are better than and superior to African-Americans, while African-Americans think they are better, with all the wars and diseases, especially the pandemic of HIV/Aids, going on in Africa. I say to you that this is utter nonsense; both groups possess the same mindset – give me, give me and blame, blame, blame others for our failures. I don't want to even go here; it is entirely another topic of discussion.

SUCCEEDING THROUGH THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF THE SPIDER WEB ECONOMIC DOCTRINE

Through the application of the Spider Web Economic Doctrine, you need to make informed decisions as to how you spend your hard-earned money. As I said before, I am not an advocate of separateness, but an advocate of reciprocity. One society can't leave its mouth wide open for us to dump all our earnings into their society, and then close their mouth and say, let's not do likewise to these people who patronise us. No, it shouldn't continue to be like that. This is why, in the United States, I am very critical of how the Chinese community comes into the Black community, opens their restaurants, never employs one Black – even to do some cleaning for them – never knows anything about the community other than where their business is located, and never patronises the community. And since we as Black people enjoy eating Chinese food and spend about \$40 million a day doing that, it means we are spending about \$15 billion a year and, employing the economic multiplier effect, we are actually pouring in about \$120 billion into the Chinese economy.

Africans like good things; in fact, they like the best, especially if it is expensive, which we equate with quality. We should emulate the Indians by trapping the money that comes into our community. One of the effects of racism has been this notion that whatever is Black is inferior, and it has been ingrained in our psyche, so that when we go out there, we avoid Black businesses. Because of years of racism, we feel more than honoured if white establishments allow us to shop in their stores. But if Blacks wouldn't patronise your business because they know it is owned by a Black individual, then hire a white, an Indian, an Arab – it doesn't matter. What you don't want is failure because you are trying to be a goody-two-shoes businessman for your people, and then you fail and everybody laughs and pats you on the back because you are down to their level again.

We must organise cooperative clubs, which we call 'ISISUS', where a group of like-minded individuals contribute a certain amount of money on a daily, weekly or monthly basis. Let's assume that there are 20 people in a club, and they contribute a total of \$50 000 a month; an amount of \$10 000 could be given to an individual, which that individual could earmark for starting a business or putting down on the purchase of a house, but certainly not to buy a luxury car. That's the method the Koreans in America employed to gain control of more than 75 per cent of the produce market. Initially, they were denied credit by banks, but now they own not only their own banks but also chunks of prime real estate.

We must set up manufacturing facilities, even if it is just to manufacture candles. You would be quite surprised that, in many

African countries, candles are very much part of their imports from countries like Taiwan. Indians make the clothes they wear, the televisions they watch, the wristwatches they wear, the shoes they wear. In fact, India is more or less a self-contained society, a self-contained society that is able to satisfy the needs of its people, but with more than enough to export.

We must set up business centre services capable of competing for the industrialised world's back-office businesses, as the Indians have done, and, I am happy to say, as the Ghanaians are now doing.

Our motto, no matter how we have to say it, is 'patronise Black businesses, stupid!' And, as I said on page 20 of *Capitalist Nigger*: 'It is better to die in the sustained effort to reach your goals, than to die from fear of not even venturing.'

CONCLUSION

I will start with a quote from a speech given by then Deputy President Thabo Mbeki on 13 August 1998, titled 'The African Renaissance': 'Africa cannot renew herself where its upper echelons are a mere parasite on the rest of society, enjoying a self-endowed mandate to use their political power and define the uses of such power such that its exercise ensures that our continent reproduces itself as the periphery of the world economy, poor, underdeveloped and incapable of development. The African Renaissance demands that we purge ourselves of the parasites and maintain a permanent vigilance against the danger of the entrenchment in African society of this rapacious stratum with its social morality according to which everything in society must be organised materially to benefit the few.' A very poignant observation, indeed.

There is absolutely no doubt that you represent the upper echelons of society, and you surely don't want to be parasitic on that society. Your aim should be how to accentuate the power of the Spider Web Economic Doctrine to mirror the super-success of the Indians, and to catapult the African economy to the next level.

It might not be politically correct for me to say this, but I am not known as politically correct most of the time. I hated apartheid with a passion, and still loathe racism. The white people in this country committed atrocities far beyond anyone's imagination. But the truth must be told, and, as I have warned you before, this is the 21st century; it is time that we started telling ourselves the truth, no matter how bitter that truth may be. If the truth must be told, the whites also did some good things. They built an infrastructure far in advance of any existing in any African country. They put in place an infrastructure that has enabled South African businesses to become major players in other African countries. Of course, we know why they did that, don't we? I don't have to spell it for you. Truth be told,

as recently as five years ago, it was impossible to complete phone calls to Nigeria from the US without waiting for God knows how long. Now, everybody has cellphones. I am not saying that without South Africa it wouldn't have happened, but nevertheless it happened through the aggressive pursuit of business expansion from the phone companies in South Africa.

Therefore, I must seriously warn you that you shouldn't expect to be handed everything on a platter of gold, just because of what you have suffered throughout the apartheid era. It is this type of behaviour by other Africans after independence that has led to the total decay and abandonment of any modicum of infrastructure that the colonial masters left. Rather than building upon what they left, instead we let it rot, and spend incredible amounts of money buying new equipment, only to let that go without maintenance. Fortunately for South Africa, the whites are still here with you. I am not an advocate of separatism; that's not what Capitalist Nigger is all about. It is about competing with the best in the world head to head, emulating them, seeing what has made them such a success and copying it for you: the Spider Web doctrine.

THE FAILURE AND PARASITIC NATURE OF THE BLACK INTELLECTUAL CLASS

During my South African tour of 2005, I visited Durban, Cape Town and Johannesburg. In both Durban and Cape Town, I gave speeches, but it was in Cape Town that tears ran down my cheeks. The Western Cape Judge President, Judge John Hlophe, had brought a number of other Black judges with him to the reception given to me later in the day. He even apologised for being late.

The reason I cried was that the Judge President talked about how they had read and heard what I had talked about – how they had lost their way – and that they were going to start mentoring indigent members of society. He thanked me for the honesty of my observations.

I returned the next day to Johannesburg to address the Black Management Forum (BMF). When I arrived, the then President of the BMF took me aside and asked whether I had seen about 20 buses outside. I said I had. He said the buses were there because of what I had been saying about how most of the guests had forgotten their backgrounds, preferring to tool around in their Mercedes-Benzes or BMWs, while ignoring the downtrodden. After my talk, they were going to travel to Soweto to have their dinner as a way of patronising Black businesses.

These two occasions marked the high points of my visit to South Africa in 2005: it was evident that people were listening to what I was saying.

Good morning, honoured guests, captains of industry, distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

I want to thank the organisers of this conference, the Black Management Forum, for inviting me today to be its keynote speaker. Since I arrived in South Africa ten days ago, I have been accorded the greatest welcome that any author could ever receive. I can tell you that I have really had a great time here. Of course, who wouldn't, when you have lived from one radio station to another, from one television station to another, from one debate to another, from one city to another? The climax was on Tuesday, when I was invited to speak to a distinguished group of Black South African leaders in Cape Town, including Judge President of the Cape Town courts, the distinguished Honourable John Hlophe and three of his colleagues, who had to leave their judicial chambers to attend the event, and who still had the humility to apologise for being a few minutes late. But nothing made me more emotional than when, after I had spoken, with

discussions entertained and meals eaten, the Honourable Judge President proposed a toast in my honour. Not only that, but a member of the group proposed that that gathering, being the first time that such leaders in Cape Town had met, be used as the foundation for a network that would meet regularly to chart the course of the new South Africa, and then proposed the Judge President as their keynote speaker at their next event. I felt like crying for that kind of honour – being given the credit for starting such a major undertaking.

But to come here today, and be informed by the managing director of the Black Management Forum, Mr Jerry Vilakazi, that, after listening to everything I have been saying on radio and television and through many newspaper interviews, the whole group of more than 400 people here today would be going to Soweto to have their dinner this evening, due to the ‘Capitalist Nigger’s Spider Web Economic Doctrine’, is the highest honour I have ever been paid in my life since I know most of you have never been to Soweto to have such a meal before. I felt like crying on Tuesday evening; I really don’t know what to do now. All I can say is, thank you all. The yuppies are coming home. I wish I could have gone with you this evening, but my flight back to the US is in the next five hours. But again, thank you all so much for this great honour. I have no doubt that the R60 000 I estimate you will be spending in Soweto this evening is a drop in the bucket, but remember the multiplier effect, which I will talk about later.

As I said before, here I am today back in Johannesburg and in the midst of a much larger crowd of the movers and shakers and captains of industry. When I look at the list of attendees and speakers, I feel very small. To be asked to be the keynote speaker today, I feel like the driver who was asked to go to JFK airport in New York to pick up Pope John Paul II. As you all know, the Pope is the highest person on this earth next to God, and he carries a lot of luggage to justify his standing with God. When the Pope emerged from the airport, the driver quickly saw the large number of suitcases the Pope had arrived with and loaded them into the limousine. The driver opened the back door for the Pope to enter, but the pontiff stood at the curb near the driver’s door. The driver went up to the pontiff and said, ‘Your Eminence, please sir, kindly get into the back of the car,’ as he continued to hold the back door for the Pope. But the Pope continued to stand there, and the driver said to the Pope, ‘Please, kindly get in.’ The Pope turned and said to the driver, ‘You know, at the Vatican City, they never allow me to drive, I am always being driven. Would you mind if I drive this thing today?’ The driver thought he was going to die, and cursed the day that he was assigned to pick up the Pope.

‘Your Eminence,’ said the driver, ‘no way am I going to let you

drive in this city. What if something happened? I could never go to Heaven.' And the Pope said to him, 'Don't worry, I will use my good offices to wangle you in.' The driver relented, and the pontiff asked him to sit in the back. As soon as the Pope took the steering wheel, the driver regretted having allowed him to drive, because the pontiff drove so fast that, after a few miles, they heard the siren of the police on their back. The Pope stopped the car, and the policeman got out from his car to give them a ticket for driving 100 miles an hour in a 60 miles per hour zone.

As he approached the car, the policeman recognised the driver as the Pope. He stopped in his tracks and then ran back to his car. He picked up his police radio and radioed his commander at headquarters, and said to him, 'I just stopped a car for speeding.' The commander said to him, 'So? Why are you calling? Book the damn man for speeding.' The policeman said to him, 'Listen the driver is a big man.' The commander asked him if it was the mayor; the policeman said 'bigger'. Governor? The policeman still said 'bigger'. Then the commander got exasperated and asked if it was the President of the United States, and the policeman said no. Then who could it be, the commander wanted to know. The policeman replied that the man is so big that the Pope is driving him.

So, you can see how I feel, being in the midst of such eminent individuals as yourselves. I feel like I am being driven by many popes, which is a great position to be in.

When I was asked to be the keynote speaker on 'The Role of the Black Middle Class and Business in Addressing the Challenges of the Second Economy', I felt rather elated, but my elation was short-lived. I see from the programme that there are quite a number of individuals who would have a lot of things to say about the Black Middle Class, and I am sure they would have a lot of good things to say about that class.

As for me, on the other hand, you see the Black – or rather the African – Middle Class and I haven't been friends for a while now. Why? you may ask. Because I have always equated the Black Middle Class with the Black Intellectual Class. I am sure that what I am going to say here today has no relevance to the Black Middle Class here in South Africa, because I believe the South African Middle Class is still evolving – eleven years is not enough time to establish the empiricism of such a group. This is not the same as what has happened in other African countries, where we have had more than forty years of experience to make a determination as to the worth of the African Middle Class – or, as I said, the African Intellectual Class – and how they have contributed to the economic growth of the African continent. I use the African Intellectual Class interchangeably because,

basically, it constitutes the African Middle Class. Unfortunately, I see the problem that Africa faces today, more than forty years after the achievement of independence in most of the African countries, to be squarely the failure of the African Middle Class.

In one of the explanations I offered about my Spider Web Economic Doctrine, which I enunciated in my book, *Capitalist Nigger: The Road to Success*, I opined that 'it is an empirical economic model that recognises that the present intellectual class of Africans is parasitic on the society, abjectly non-productive and should be sidelined if Africa is to move forward economically. It is recognition of how the Asian intellectual class, especially the Indians, has merged their intellectualism with entrepreneurship to achieve economic growth and power that are beginning to dwarf Western nations.'

Let's, for the purpose of this discussion, trace the history of the African Middle Class. We have to remember that they are the group that took over the baton, or rulership if you wish, of Africa, after the white man left. But what did this group of people do after they took over from the white man? They decided to take over the opulent lifestyle of the oppressors. Rather than eliminate the excesses of the Caucasian masters, the Black Middle Class – the group that I really believe is the intellectual class – saw their takeover from the white man as an opportunity to double the pain of the masses of African people. Their only claim to the throne vacated by the white man was that they had gone to school.

The Black Middle Class that took over from the white man inherited the positions left by the Europeans; they inherited his huge offices; they inherited his more than ten messengers; they inherited his sex on demand from his numerous secretaries; they inherited his disrespect of his subordinates; they inherited the assignment of more than five cars to one official; they inherited his huge houses with several servants and drivers. They inherited his demand for unquestioned authority and obedience. The masses of the people pampered the newly crowned Black Middle Class beyond human endurance, because they expected that they would see a difference between their own people and the departing white man. Instead they found that their behaviour, in most cases, was more tyrannical than their white predecessors.

Let me tell you this: Africa had such great promise when the white man left in the 1960s, when most of the African countries gained their independence – or, rather, were granted their independence. More than forty years after independence, tell me which African country you could point to as a proud, shining example that other African countries should emulate? More than forty years after our so-called independence, do you know what our rewards have

been? We have had incalculable numbers of coups d'état by military idiots, who were supposed to protect our lives and our borders but who have instead found the procurement of worthless Second World War weapons as their passport to leadership. We have been rewarded with all kinds of wars because everybody wants to be the leader so that they could lay their hands on the treasuries of their respective countries – Sani Abacha of Nigeria, Idi Amin of Uganda, Bokassa in the Central African Republic, Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaïre (Democratic Republic of Congo), and Sergeant Samuel Doe of Liberia. In fact, today we still have a lot of the military airheads masquerading as democratic leaders.

Let me say this: I am very sad to acknowledge that Africa is worse off than it was when the colonialists left. Africa continues to be called the beggar continent, according to our two eminent [former] presidents, Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, despite possessing the largest percentage of the world's natural resources. The world has given Africa more than \$500 billion in the last forty years. But what have we done with that money? Is there evidence that we have employed this huge amount of money judiciously in the service of the masses of Africans? In most of the African countries, is there any evidence that the money was used to build good roads, provide better educational opportunities for the masses, provide good drinking water or provide electricity to the masses? Apart from this huge amount that we have been given, we also went on a borrowing spree, with the result that today Africa still owes the world over \$300 billion, and we are asking for debt forgiveness so that, when we get this money, we can quickly turn around and repatriate it back into European banks, and buy mansions and castles in Europe.

I have no regret in saying this: the Black/African Middle Class-cum-Intellectual Class in the other 52 African countries has been the greatest disgrace to the African continent. With the departure of our colonial masters, this group had the opportunity to evolve economic, political and social paradigms, but failed woefully because they wanted to live a utopian life devoid of reality. When the Europeans were still the ruling class, they made attempts to develop indigenous agriculture, develop indigenous factories, develop some infrastructure for the basic needs of the people. But with the departure of the Europeans, the Black/African Middle Class decided they wanted a better taste of what the Europeans were tasting in their own countries.

Let me give you an example of what happened to rice growing in an area about 110 kilometres from my village. The people in that area started growing rice and, after processing it, selling it to the people. The people who could afford rice at that time were really the middle

class, or what we considered the middle class; they had big houses and cars, and sometimes they would deliberately splash rain water on you to show how much higher they were. At that same time, Thailand was just beginning to grow, process and export rice to Nigeria.

Nigerians had been used to eating the superior Uncle Ben's rice, imported from America, or other kinds of rice from Europe. It was beneath the middle class to eat the Thai rice or Nigerian rice. But even the poor began to prefer the Thai rice rejected by the middle class. They complained that the Nigerian rice was sandy, which was the same accusation made by the middle class about the Thai and Nigerian rice. But, gradually, Thai rice began to gain ground in Nigeria, and today most Nigerians would rather eat Thai rice than Uncle Ben's rice. But this rejection of the attempt to start an industry that could have provided a great means of livelihood and jobs to the population was allowed to die because of the so-called African Middle Class thumbing their noses at the Nigerian rice.

It is this type of attitude that has reduced Africa to a dependency continent. We are unable to grow the food to feed ourselves, or to clothe ourselves or to do anything for ourselves, for that matter, without depending on others to do it for us. Back in America, it is the same attitude of dependence on the part of the Black Middle Class that has made the Black community an economically enslaved community. I don't mean to say that segregation or racism is ever good, but during segregation in the United States – of course, there is still segregation, though it is dressed in different forms, which I don't want to go into right now – there were thriving Black businesses. Black Americans controlled their own communities economically because they were denied services by the white businesses, and they were therefore forced to patronise their own businesses. However, since the demise of racism, and led by the unbridled consumerist nature of the Black Middle Class, Black businesses in Black cities throughout most of the United States are disappearing.

Let me give you one example of the enormous nature of the total enslavement of the Black community. Black America generates almost \$800 billion a year in revenues. That means if Black America was a country, it would rank as the seventh largest in the world in terms of GDP (gross domestic product). On the other hand, the amount that accrues to the Black community in terms of business revenues generated by Black businesses is only about \$50 billion. You ask yourself the question: where did the rest of the \$750 billion go?

Just like the African Middle Class that took over from the imperialists, and believes that whatever is foreign is better, the Black Middle Class also believes that whatever is white is better. Black communities are dying economically. Go to any Black city in America:

Blacks don't control their communities economically. Go to Harlem, the so-called capital of Black America. Go from one store to another, go from one establishment to another: you see a community totally in the hands of foreigners – I mean other Americans who have decided to reap incredible profits from the profligate spending of our people.

We abandon our own businesses to patronise the businesses of others, because, just like the African Middle Class, we feel honoured to be accepted in white establishments. The African Middle Class prefers to spend their time vacationing and shopping in Europe, and our corrupt leaders prefer to put their ill-gotten loot in European bank accounts, just like the Black Middle Class prefers to spend their money in white communities.

Contrast this with the Asian community. Wherever they live, they control the community economically; in fact, they control the Black community economically as well.

In America today, more than 78 per cent of the motel business – that's the one- to three-star hotels – are controlled by Indians and people of Asian origin; Indians control more than 68 per cent of the petrol stations in America, most of which have convenience stores as well, where people can do their shopping. So just imagine who benefited the most from Hurricane Katrina, and the jacking-up of petrol prices. It certainly wasn't the Black American community. Mind you, I say this about the Asian, and particularly the Indian, community in America, because I have great admiration for what they have achieved. It is an incredible accomplishment for a people who achieved their independence some nine years before the first African country, Ghana, became independent. Now, India has become an economic giant; in fact, India generates more than \$32 billion in income from helping American and Western corporations to manage their back offices located in India. For example, if you were to call American Express, do you know where the call would be answered? In India. And that goes for all the other credit card companies.

I have studied the Indian community extensively because I admire them a great deal, and I have come to christen their economic system as the Spider Web Economic Doctrine, an empirical economic model that, as I said earlier, recognises that the present intellectual class of Africans is parasitic on the society, abjectly non-productive and should be sidelined if Africa is to move forward economically. It is a recognition of how the Asian intellectual class – especially the Indians – on the other hand, has merged their intellectualism with entrepreneurship to achieve economic growth and power that is beginning to dwarf Western nations. Of course, I would be happy to enunciate the Spider Web Economic Doctrine here, but unfortunately we don't have enough time.

There is no doubt that there has been a great improvement in the standard of living of African-Americans. Yes, there has certainly been progress. But, do you know the difference between the Black Middle Class and the white middle class? If a member of the Black Middle Class doesn't get one salary payment in a month, he/she would revert back to the poverty class. If we don't get one month's salary payment, we revert back to the poorhouse. That is the Black Middle Class.

As I said earlier, the Black Middle Class in South Africa is still evolving. It is too early to assess the impact it would have on the economic empowerment of this country. But, let me say to this to you: the Black Middle Class in South Africa needs to study what has happened in other African countries and let it be a lesson to you here. We need also to study the Indian economic miracle, which has married their intellectual class with the entrepreneurial class to form this cohesive economic giant.

You don't want to fall into what then Deputy President Mbeki said of this class of people, in his 'African Renaissance' speech in 1998 (see Chapter 2). I urge you to hearken to that advice, not to be parasitic on the rest of society because you feel entitled.

Finally, I must sound this note of warning to Africa: there is a new kind of slavery marching through Africa; it is the economic giant called China. Yes, it is stimulating and exciting seeing the competition the Chinese are giving to the Western world in Africa. But we are again abandoning our independence for a quick solution to our economic woes. Africa needs to suffer a little if we are going to build a solid economic base for the generation of Africans to come. First it was slavery, then colonialism, and now we are letting economic slavery in the door. In the past, we could make the excuse that our forefathers and fathers were not in a position to know or do anything about it. We can't say the same thing now, that we don't know what is going on. We don't want to mortgage the future of our children for a quick-fix economic solution.

Again, I feel honoured being invited to speak to you.

Thank you. Stay blessed.

INTELLECTUAL BANKRUPTCY OF THE AFRICAN ELITE

This chapter is culled from my book, *Capitalist Nigger: The Road to Success – A Spider Web Doctrine*. I decided to include it here because this chapter has elicited a lot of comments from the African intelligentsia, most of it negative, because of the criticism levelled at them.

Africans are not a forceful people, neither are they aggressive to the point of a fight to the finish. We are not resolute in our commitment to a goal and lack the devil-may-care doggedness needed to scale a Mount Everest. We are easily influenced and distracted in pursuit of a quest to reach a set goal and to be the best that is destined for us. Intellectually, we are bankrupt and decrepit. We have a very short attention span, and have a very short burst of energy that easily extinguishes in the face of impediment. We prefer to be parasites of a culture that we had no hand in creating, a Caucasian culture that took years to perfect, and which we cannot easily emulate in its basic tenets – a predisposition to make wars not only on themselves but more so on others for intimidation and supremacy. Unlike his Caucasian counterpart, the African is a compassionate fool, easily influenced to hospitality of known enemies because of their acts of deceitful intentions.

The balkanisation of Africa by the Caucasian nations – Britain, France, Spain, Italy, Belgium, Portugal and Germany – resulted in the creation of disparate and, at best, baseless boundaries – countries without geographic significance. The fight to gain independence was not so much the aggressive pursuit of the goal of independence by African leaders as the realisation by the Europeans that they had looted all that they needed to loot from Africa. The leaders of Africa who benefited from the handout of independence to African countries had no concept of the ideals of rulership they were inheriting other than their desire to displace the Europeans in their oppression of masses of the people and their opulent lifestyles with the resources of the people. These leaders' vision was in stark contrast to that of Nelson Mandela, Jomo Kenyatta, Kwame Nkrumah, Mwalimu Nyerere and Nnamdi Azikiwe, all of whom were ready to give up their lives in pursuit of the freedom of their people. They understood what it was to be independent and free and were ready to die to attain that goal. The lack of commitment to the real meaning of freedom and independence by those African leaders who 'won' independence for their respective countries from their former colonial masters has done more to impugn the intelligence of the Black man and raise more questions about his

ability to govern himself.

Today, Africa is worse off than when it gained independence from the former colonial masters. The standard of living of the masses has decreased steadily since independence, to the extent that now there is more malnutrition, more disease, less provision of essential services such as good roads, clean drinking water and good health care, and less freedom to express one's views. The promise of independence has hardly been fulfilled. Africa has incurred more debt, yet has nothing to show for it. The debts incurred were used more for grandiose projects than for services to benefit the people, such as the late Félix Houphouët-Boigny's \$1 billion project to build the so-called biggest and best-known cathedral in his remote village of Yamoussoukro, in Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast). That is \$1 billion to build a cathedral that is now not being utilised by the people – a large amount of money gone down the drain. Was it necessary to build such a cathedral and deny the people essential services?

The issue in this portion of the book is not so much to show that the leaders have not provided the leadership that would make us proud and show that we can stand on equal footing with the rest of the world, but rather to show the intellectual bankruptcy of the so-called African elite. The elite, rather than the majority of the crude African leadership, stand out as the single group that has damaged Africa most because of their quest for an easy life of luxury. This is the group that took over the baton from the former colonial rulers. They took over the opulent life lived by the oppressors. Rather than eliminate the excesses of the Caucasian masters, the elite saw their takeover as an opportunity to double the pain of the masses of the people. Their claim to the throne vacated by the Caucasians was that they had gone to school, an education in which practical learning was not a requirement.

The elite inherited the European's position; he inherited his huge offices; he inherited his more than ten messengers; he inherited his sex on demand from his numerous secretaries; he inherited his disrespect of his subordinates; he inherited more than three cars; he inherited his huge houses with several servants and drivers. He inherited his demand for unquestioned authority and obedience. He was pampered beyond human endurance by the masses who expected to see a difference from Caucasian behaviour. Instead they found that their behaviour, in most cases, was more tyrannical than their Caucasian predecessors. But the elite's excesses would not be allowed to go on forever unchallenged; unfortunately, the challenge came from the wrong quarters – the military. One by one, African governments were taken over by military men of questionable character – immoral and illiterate men such as Idi Amin, Emperor Bokassa, Sergeant Doe,

Mobutu Sese Seko and Sani Abacha. Yahya Jammeh of the Gambia is the latest in a line of idiots who seized power because they possessed the gun, and then quickly seized the ballot box in a corrupt election to declare themselves democratically elected.

The greatest sin of the African elite is not opening their mouths to challenge these despots. They feared for their opulent lifestyles. They feared losing their presents of money stolen from the masses for their prostitutes; they feared being deprived of air-conditioned homes when the masses are out in the streets without electricity; they feared their swimming pools not being filled with water when the average man could not even get clean drinking water and had to depend on polluted and infected streams; they did not want to be deprived of attending clubs and drinking free drinks at the expense of the masses; they did not want to be deprived of trotting around the globe.

The Europeans, on the other hand, decided to let these buffoons be perceived as having taken over, and they exercised, and continue to exercise, power over these puppets in any major decision-making.

Unfortunately for the African elite, the buffoonery called the African military had their own ideas of personal enrichment and aggrandisement. The elite were the first to congratulate any military idiot who seized power and protested how their predecessors had corrupted the country and looted its treasury. They danced to the tune of the new dictator in the hope that they would be allowed their opulent lifestyle. But the military, being who they are, preferred to spend the country's largesse and money on loose women rather than on the comfort of the elite and the provision of essential services to the masses of the people. They cut off their privileges and curtailed their attempts to question why their lifestyles were being scrapped. Those who attempted to question the military were quickly jailed or executed to send a message of intimidation to others never to attempt such a 'disrespect of constituted authority'. At the first sign of a contraction of their lifestyle, most of the elite packed up and fled Africa, to the United States and Canada, and to European nations.

Today, there are about 2.5 million Africans in the United States of America. The majority are the elites who fled and the new elites who are planning to return to an extravagant life of abundance. Hence, the African immigrant group has been declared by the US Census Bureau as the most educated immigrant group in America. But, beyond the fact that he is highly educated, the African immigrant, unlike his Indian, Chinese and other immigrant counterparts, has not had any visible impact on America. Most are still caught up in their loss of opulent lifestyles in Africa, and have not been able to assimilate into a society that does not recognise whether you are a 'prince', a 'chief', a 'commoner' or the son or daughter of wealthy parents, but only

recognises what you have accomplished by yourself.

There is this nauseating nostalgia about 'life back home, where I had seven servants, who washed and ironed my clothes, where I did not know where the kitchen was situated in my own house, where I had five drivers for my five cars, where I could have as many women as I wanted, where I rubbed shoulders with powers that be, where everybody called me Sir/Madam, where people understood that I was a very important person (VIP), where I took 30 per cent of all contracts I awarded. Now I am just a number in America. In America, nobody knows who I am and hardly cares; they don't recognise that I am a prince or chief who is a security guard, right?' ... on and on, ad infinitum ad nauseam.

The so-called educated African in America is tragically damaged psychologically between his concept of his own importance and the reality of American life. Many have been living in a dream world of returning home to grandeur, and avoid being assimilated into American society, without accomplishing anything, until their coffin has to be sent back to their homeland. They avoid participation in the American way of life, which is looked on as inferior, and ignore the reality of not having made any contributions to a continent that is beckoning for people with ideas to return to contribute to its economic development. Africans talk incessantly about their homelands – they know everything that happens there. They criticise everything. They will sit and talk a whole day about the leaders who are creating one problem or another, without ever offering solutions. They have all kinds of organisations – compounds, villages, towns, counties, provinces, states, countries – the missions of which are the betterment of the area back in Africa, but which in actual fact are used for displaying the same self-importance that American society has denied them. Saturday after Saturday, Sunday after Sunday, there is this meeting or that meeting. People come there, list all their degrees, the schools they attended, the positions they occupied back home, their parents' standings in society. By the time they finish reciting all their accolades, the time for the meeting has more than elapsed and the same happens at the next meeting. In Africa, we have a saying: 'You don't chase after a mouse when your house is on fire.' But it seems that Africans in America have perfected the science of chasing after a mouse when their house is on fire. With the meetings, all the boastings, Africans in America cannot claim to have made an impact in America in matters concerning Africa or in Africa itself, with all the wars, diseases, famine and all kinds of problems going on there. More than 800 000 Tutsis and Hutus were killed in Rwanda; Africans in America did not lift a finger to help, even in just expressing their sympathies or in gathering blankets, food, medical

supplies and drugs or even toys for the children. It is the same story all over the continent. Even now when there is the pandemic of HIV/Aids, Africans in America seem unconcerned. There is the war in Sierra Leone, where thousands of children and women have been raped, decapitated and murdered. Africans in America have not lifted a finger of protest against these genocides.

The African in America does not understand what it means to be committed to a principle of alleviating the sufferings of their people. They are much more concerned with their stupid importance, where everybody is a 'chief' and there are, as they say in America, 'no Indians'. I have yet to find a group of Africans in America who have decided to volunteer to go to Africa for any relief work. Yet, they express all kinds of anger when they see a Caucasian man or woman carrying an African child, or leading a group of wounded children or women, in any war-torn area in Africa. They will spend an eternity discussing the pros and cons of that Caucasian man or woman carrying that child, rather than doing something about it themselves. I repeat that the African in America is intellectually bankrupt and decrepit. Here is a group that is regarded as the most educated immigrant group in America; they are yet to accomplish even one-twentieth of what their Indian, Chinese and Korean counterparts have been able to accomplish in America. In America, Indians are one of the shining examples of success in so many categories of American business that they can no longer be discounted politically, economically or socially. In New York City, the Indians control all the newsstands, they control all the taxis, and over 90 per cent of the limousine car services; they control all the motels and all the gas stations including all the convenience stores attached to the stations. In fact, the Indian yellow cab driver, more than any other cab driver, is the one most likely to refuse to pick up a Black passenger in New York City. The Indians have built major companies, especially in the computer and internet fields. Some of their companies are major players in these fields, and they have taken their companies public. Even with our preponderance of the 'educateds', no African in America has started a computer or internet company from scratch and taken that company public. Africans cannot boast of controlling this or that area of business in America.

The Chinese, on the other hand, control how America eats. Even in the movies, you always see the actors or actresses ordering one form of Chinese food or another. Africans spend a lot of money eating or ordering Chinese food. Our African missions to the United Nations, embassies in Washington and all the African consulates-general spend millions of dollars eating Chinese food each year. I have never seen a Chinese going to an African restaurant to reciprocate our patronage.

The Chinese also control how America keeps its wardrobe clean.

Keeping in mind that we are the most educated immigrant group in America, Africans can be found in thousands in universities and colleges throughout the United States, as administrators, professors, senior lecturers and adjunct lecturers. There are thousands of African medical practitioners throughout the medical learning establishments and in practice in America. But, the most puzzling issue is the nonexistence of any research on the part of our so-called intellectual establishments in matters affecting the continent.

Recently, I read two articles that I thought would ignite the anger of the African elite in the universities; one was written by a Caucasian woman of Jewish descent who argued that civilisation did not emanate from Africa, but rather from Greece; the other article was about the new attempt to foist the origin of HIV/Aids on Africa. Well, I said to myself, these two articles would certainly excite the response of our effete intellectual snobs. I even challenged the so-called African Studies Association, the African university teachers' group, and told one of their leaders that I was appalled at the lack of meaningful research undertaken by our so-called learned to respond to critical and detrimental assertions affecting Africa, and that these two articles presented a challenge to them to refute these patently meritless arguments, produced by Caucasians to continue to demean the supremacy of the Black man. I was assured that they would respond, but, true to their nature, it is one thing to get a degree and quite another to exercise the use of that degree.

African scholars are the same the world over. They get their degrees at the highest level; then they get a teaching position or job at a company. That is the end of it. You cannot point to any research they have come up with that has elicited comment that could be regarded as controversial. No African scholar in America is called upon by the major television networks as an expert on matters affecting Africa.¹ With the exception of the literary icon Chinua Achebe, whose book *Things Fall Apart* is a staple for teaching in almost all universities throughout America, no other African can boast of a book they have written being utilised (in such a wide manner) as teaching material in the universities.

The problem of African scholars is the same problem I talked about at the beginning of this part of the book: a lack of aggressiveness, a lack of commitment to the goal of later rather than immediate gratification, and, of course, being easily influenced by the pursuit of money. The African scholar is intellectually dishonest. At a time when thousands of Chinese scholars and researchers are swarming American research laboratories, African scholars are nowhere to be found in those intellectually challenging positions. In

fact, one Chinese researcher, in responding to America's accusation that a Chinese had sold secrets to mainland China, intoned that he couldn't understand what the fuss was all about: 'After all,' he said, 'Mandarin [Chinese language] has become the lingua franca in most research establishments throughout the United States.'

Today, China can boast of possessing and being able to build nuclear weapons, through the efforts of Chinese citizens in America. India and Pakistan have been able to detonate atomic bombs through the disciplined research of Indians and Pakistanis in America in helping their counterparts in their respective homelands to acquire the technology. The question really is this: how could Africa have millions of educated men and women, yet have to import experts in all fields to manage areas of economic development, engineering and others for which Africans have gone to the same school? All this is due to the shallowness of our 'education', a non-commitment to the study of knowledge for the benefit of the people rather than a study on how we can make money fastest without much effort. In the early days when Africans came to the United States for studies, there used to be quite a few of them enrolled in engineering and science-related studies. Now, that is passé. Go to any university and Africans are enrolled in business administration, sociology, accounting, finance, pre-law, pre-medicine; you hardly get people in engineering and physics. It is no wonder that, when we come out with some of these worthless degrees, we are herded into jobs with the Human Resources Administration – people with master's degrees, for whom the day they get their degrees is the day they stop reading anything on paper. The African elite, as a mirror image of the larger Black society, is a consumer group rather than a productive group. A people that regards itself as independent should be able to produce independent thought. Yet, Africans still depend on Europeans, 40 years after 'gaining' their independence from their former colonial masters and at the dawn of a new millennium, to furnish us with books on any subject. Our so-called elites cannot devote enough time to research to duplicate the same research already conducted and to articulate it in a language Africans can understand.

Is it any wonder, then, that we go to school and still come out illiterate? It is no wonder that, despite our years of schooling, if we need our roads built, we contract them out to European engineering firms to build for us; if we need power stations, we get Caucasians or the Japanese to build them for us; if we need drinking water, we have to import European or American experts to do it for us. We are 'highly educated', yet we cannot even assemble a bicycle – we have to import it. We cannot assemble a radio – we have to import it. We cannot assemble a fan – we have to import it. We cannot assemble a

television – we have to import it. According to the United Nations, Africa constitutes the world's poorest land mass. There is poverty everywhere and the pay of the average man is the lowest in the world. Yet you hardly see the industrial powers rushing to Africa to open factories, which would produce goods that would then be resold in their markets.

Africans go to school so that they can acquire half-educated knowledge to terrorise the masses in the same way that the colonial masters did; other immigrant groups like the Indians and Chinese have been able to use their education to acquire knowledge beneficial to their people all over the world. It is quite amazing that, even in the field of history, our African elite have failed us in not producing well-researched publications on the history of the African continent. The saddest part is that we have to be taught African history through the eyes of the Caucasian. But thanks to Africa's children who were sold into slavery, the history of Africa has started to be known through our own eyes.

The tenet of a Capitalist Nigger is a love of money and what money can do to uplift the masses and not terrorise them or steal them blind. The African elite have been a total failure; they cannot raise their heads in the community of scholars or the intelligentsia. They want to continue to sit at the head of the totem pole, being spoon-fed, rather than at the head of the battle line leading the masses of Black people throughout the world. That they have not been able to understand that the total Black Race is under economic slavery is a testament to their half-education and illiteracy. A community cannot survive when its so-called educated citizens are morally and intellectually bankrupt and decrepit. You cannot have a community whose intelligentsia is a mere parasite of other cultures.

1 That was true when I wrote Capitalist Nigger, but not now, when I see people like George Ayittey on CNN. I myself have appeared on CBS, NBC, ABC and UPN.

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ZIMBABWE'S MUGABE AND WHITE FARMERS

I wrote this article in August 2002, at the height of the debate about the retributive land policy of President Robert Mugabe. One of the points I made in the article was that Africans were almost 100 per cent behind the policy, and that 'It seems the height of hypocrisy that the world should be focused on the plight and non-payment of compensation to white farmers.'

In Zimbabwe, white farmers are still defying the order issued by the government of President Robert Mugabe that they should vacate farmlands that the government has targeted for takeover. Others have decided to obey the order. Unfortunately, the issue of land redistribution, or 'seizure', as the foreign media would have us believe, has been the most misunderstood, to the extent that it has been lumped together with the politics of President Mugabe. But the issue of politics in Zimbabwe, and ultimately that of Mugabe, should not be allowed to becloud the attempt by the country to equitably redistribute land stolen by whites in the first instance without compensation to its rightful African owners.

While white farmers continue to shed crocodile tears, it is a matter of record that in a land of more than 11 million people, the whites, who make up less than 2 per cent of the population, control more than 60 per cent of the arable land. It is also a matter of record that, although 95 per cent of the white farmers have received notice to quit the land, those whose land has been taken over have all received compensation, and of the 500 who have agreed to leave peacefully some have also already been paid.

It seems the height of hypocrisy that the world should be focused on the plight and non-payment of compensation to white farmers, without so much as a mention of the savagery with which the Black African owners were massacred and their lands seized without compensation. Bulawayo, the second-largest city in Zimbabwe, is an Ndebele word for 'slaughter', and it refers to the savagery of the British settlers, including the infamous Cecil Rhodes, who crushed the attempt by the indigenes to fight back, leading King Lobengula to swallow poison rather than be captured. Or should we forget the savagery of the bestial Sir Frederick Carrington, who publicly advocated that the entire Ndebele race should be forcefully removed or be exterminated? Or that of profligate Ian Smith, who seized the government in 1965 and unilaterally declared the then Southern Rhodesia independent, and who refused to apologise for the atrocities he committed while he held office? In fact, he even boasted that he

had no regrets about the estimated 30 000 Zimbabweans killed during his rule. Said Smith, 'The more we killed, the happier we were'.

As the Zimbabwe Minister of Industry and Commerce, Nathan Shamuyarira, once said, 'The land we are talking about was occupied entirely by our people, the indigenous people of the country, until 1890. They [the British] reserved the best resources – land, cattle, forestation, what have you – for themselves. What the bill simply states is that Zimbabwe belongs to the indigenous people of Zimbabwe. It does not belong to anyone else.'

It should also be remembered that, in the early 1900s, African agriculture competed head to head with white settler farmers for the market in the growing towns and mining centres of the country. However, in 1915, the Native Reserves Commission expropriated more of the high-potential land and initiated a new form of taxation to suppress indigenous competition. By the 1930s, the Corn Purchasing Board had established a regulation that discriminated against African corn, while the state moved more Africans to the non-fertile communal lands. The result of this was that the Africans, who had waged such competition against the white settlers, were rendered idle, and forced to indenture themselves as labourers to the white farmers.

As we noted earlier, despite all the vociferous claims of injustice by the white farmers, the fact is that most of those whose land has been seized have been compensated by the Zimbabwe government. In point of fact, the new law passed by the Zimbabwe parliament addresses the issue of some farmers having as many as 20 or more arable farms, some of which they have left fallow, while Africans are left with nothing.

Again, some of us, including this writer, have allowed our warped perception of Robert Mugabe's politics to becloud the other issue of compensating the white farmers. Britain, which has been acting like the ostrich it is, giving the impression that it wants real solution to the land issue, should be held totally accountable for what is happening today in Zimbabwe. As the Zimbabwe government has rightly contended, the responsibility for compensating the farmers lies with Britain, since the then British prime minister Margaret Thatcher had agreed to provide the funds as a condition of Mr Mugabe signing the Lancaster House Agreement, which finalised Zimbabwe's independence 22 years ago.

'That agreement', according to Shamuyarira, 'was abruptly abandoned when the Blair government came to power. The British minister, Mr [Robin] Cook, has now indicated that the British government would contribute to a resettlement programme. That is a good change of position.' The agreement had further made it clear that if Britain failed to pay the compensation, then Zimbabwe had no

obligation to pay for the land taken back for resettlement of landless Africans.

That agreement had barred the new Zimbabwe government of 1980 from grabbing privately owned farmland for the first ten years. For that guarantee, Britain had agreed that it would match a dollar for every dollar that this new independent Zimbabwean government would put up as compensation to buy back the farms.

The British government of Tony Blair is now arguing that Zimbabwe did not put in place the mechanism for distributing land to the poor of Zimbabwe. 'We agree,' said the British government, 'that there is a very strong case for land redistribution in Zimbabwe. Unfortunately, the government of Zimbabwe has not put in place a programme of land reform that would provide land to the poor of Zimbabwe.'

Now, Britain is looking out for the poor in Zimbabwe rather than fulfilling its obligation under the Lancaster House Agreement of 1979.

Those of us who have pointed accusing fingers at the politics of President Mugabe should do our homework. Robbers and murderers should not be allowed to keep the fruits of their ill-gotten gains. Zimbabwe belongs to Africans, even to the whites who consider themselves Africans, but the land does not belong to murderers who savagely exterminated Black Africans and seized the land without compensation. That would be a great misapplication of justice.

RAPE OF A RACE

Blacks all over the world, especially those in North America, have always demanded reparations for the slavery of Africans. But they always exclude Arabs, who started slavery before the advent of the white man. I found this untenable and wrote the article 'Rape of a Race'. Mortally afraid of their Arab masters, Black African leaders fear bringing up the issue of slavery in Sudan. Despite being only five countries, Arab Africa dictates the course of events on the continent.

The date was 6 October 1973, a day the Jews begin the observance of Yom Kippur, as well as the continued observance of 'Ramadan' by Muslims. At 2pm that day, the mighty armies of Egypt and Syria launched Operation Badr to retake the land that Israel had taken from the Arab countries in their 1967 war. Egypt, the mighty country in northeastern Africa, never consulted any of the Black African countries before launching its attack, but, as the outcome would later indicate, Black African leaders would become pawns in the Arab war with Israel.

With the zeal of anti-imperialism still in the air, and racist apartheid in South Africa and Rhodesia waxing strong, Arab leaders would employ the ferment of Africa's angst on these issues to manipulate the leaders into breaking off diplomatic relations with Israel. But when the Black African leaders balked, at a meeting in Tripoli, Libya feared that their action would invite retaliation from Western nations, which would cut off financial aid to Africans. One after the other of the Arab countries rose to pledge more than \$1 billion. Most of the African countries went on to break off diplomatic relations with Israel, and none would receive a cent of the promised \$1 billion from the Arab countries.

In a meeting held on 28 November 1973 to discuss how the Arab countries would manipulate Black African countries into supporting their war with Israel, the meeting specifically resolved as follows with respect to Africa:

Political activity complements the military campaign, and is regarded as its continuation, all as part of our struggle against the enemy. As a direct result of the positions of foreign States toward the just struggle of the Arabs, the Conference resolves:

1. (1) In Africa:
2. (a) To strengthen Arab-African cooperation in political affairs and enlarge Arab diplomatic representation in Africa.
3. (b) To sever all the diplomatic, consular, economic, cultural and other relations with South Africa, Portugal and Rhodesia of those Arab States which have not yet done so.

4. (c) Completely to ban Arab oil exports to those three States.
5. (d) To take special measures to continue the regular supply of Arab oil to sister-States in Africa.
6. (e) To strengthen economic, financial and cultural cooperation with sister-States in Africa, and widen its scope on the bilateral plane as well as on that of the regional Arab and African organizations.
7. (f) To establish an Arab-African financial organization, which will share in the plans for economic and social development and the supply of technical aid to the countries of Africa. The Arab Economic Ministers will lay down the rules of the organization and the amount of its capital.
8. (g) To give instant aid to African peoples suffering from the effects of natural catastrophe and drought.
9. (h) To increase material and diplomatic support of the struggles of Arab liberation movements.
10. (i) As a means to hasten implementation of these resolutions and the establishment of constant cooperation between the Arab and African States, to instruct the General Secretariat of the Arab League to take the operational steps and to be in contact with the General Secretariat of the Organization of African Unity and the Seven States' Committee connected with it, with a view to holding periodic conferences at the various levels, as well as at the top echelon, between Arab and African States.

As can be seen from the above document, most of the Arab governments were still dealing with apartheid South Africa and Ian Smith's rebellious Rhodesia. And, of course, the plans to 'establish an Arab-African financial organization, which will share in the plans for economic and social development and the supply of technical aid to the countries of Africa' and 'to give instant aid to African peoples suffering from the effects of natural catastrophe and drought' never materialised after the African countries broke off diplomatic relations with Israel.

During the Camp David conferences, which ultimately led to the peace agreement between Israel and Egypt, Egypt never went back to the African countries it had misled to inform them that she was making peace with Israel. And since the Camp David accord, Egypt has been receiving \$3 billion per year from the United States government. Egypt has never used any part of this huge financial assistance from the US to say to its 'sister states in Africa', 'Here is \$100 million for all your troubles.'

But the most important thing is that Egypt, as the leader of the Arab world, and the immediate neighbour to Sudan, has never done anything to stop the slavery of Black Africans in Sudan. Egypt is more interested in what happens to Palestinians than what happens to Black Africans in Sudan. If the Arab countries were to employ just one per cent of the same zeal they have employed on the Palestinian issue, slavery of Black Africans in Sudan would be a thing of the past.

The question, then, is why, with African leaders clamouring for reparations from the Western nations for the slavery of millions of

Black Africans, have they allowed this ugly stench to continue to exist in this 21st century, years after the Europeans, particularly Britain, enforced the ban on the transport of millions of Africans to the New World?

According to Amara Essy, the new Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU),² in an interview he gave in Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso, 'the United Nations conference on racism which took place in Durban, South Africa [in 2001], should declare slavery a crime against humanity'. He went on: 'What is clear is that the Durban conference should recognise slavery and the trade in Blacks as a crime against humanity.'

'If such a statement was accepted,' continued Mr Essy, 'it would serve as psychological and moral reparation for African countries.' He continued: 'Some Western countries must realise the harm they have done to Africa, enriching themselves at our expense ... when one speaks of justice and human rights, one has to morally and materially make some compensations.'

Said the new Secretary-General of the OAU, 'This could be made by debt reduction, as three-quarters of African debt is iniquitous and unjust.' Mr Essy should be commended for taking this giant step to begin a discussion of slavery in Africa. It is a major departure from what has been happening with the Organization of African Unity. But it would appear to be hypocritical for African leaders to talk about slavery, and about reparation for the injustice of slavery committed by the Western nations, when the same Black African leaders have been afraid to confront their Arab 'sister States' on the question of slavery in Sudan and Mauritania.

But, argues Professor Michael Mbabuike,³ former chair of the New York African Studies Association, 'the fact that African countries have been so stupid about not dealing with slavery in Africa, should not negate or diminish, or cast shadows on the issue of our demand for reparations for the most inhuman slavery in the history of mankind endured by people of African descent for the past 500 years.'

When this author asked Professor Mbabuike why Blacks should not demand reparations from Arabs, since they were the first to start slavery in Africa, he answered, 'Reparations on the slavery that we all know about should be demanded from all participants in these barbaric atrocities committed against a race. Africans ourselves cannot completely wash our hands of the guilt of participation in the trans-Atlantic slavery. What happens is that collective silence has been responsible throughout man's history for the greatest atrocities of man against man – trans-Atlantic slavery, the Holocaust, apartheid and the global discrimination and racism that debilitate humankind today.'

The guilt of silence that Mbabuike spoke about refers to Africans

who betrayed their kith and kin, those who abducted and sold their brothers and sisters into slavery, or simply refused to fight or intervene when the slave raiders attacked.

The 700 million Black Africans in Africa and the other 200 million in the diaspora bear the responsibility of the silence of guilt. Nobody bears the responsibility of guilt more than the organisation that represents Africa – the Organization of African Unity. The OAU was born on 25 May 1963. It has a membership of 53 countries, with the exception of Morocco, which withdrew due to its intransigence on the Western Sahara issue.

In the thirty-eight years of the OAU's existence, Black African leaders have never had the courage to bring up the issue of slavery in Africa, either in Sudan or in Mauritania, for discussion. If, as the Secretary-General of the OAU said, 'slavery and the trade in Blacks' is a crime against humanity, the issue, then, is when would Black Africa follow Mr Essy's example to see the injustice of slavery in Sudan and Mauritania?

In the whole of Africa, only five countries can actually claim to be totally Arabic in nature: Egypt, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Morocco. Yet they exert incredible influence on Black African leaders – far in excess of their numbers. 'Look,' said a former president, who requested anonymity, 'you have to understand that a lot of African countries have a lot of skeletons in their own closets. Any time they wish to point a finger at one another, they immediately recoil because they know that the other four fingers would be pointed at them. Tell me, which Black African leader would like to "bell the cat" by introducing a motion for the expulsion of the Sudan and Mauritania from the OAU? Don't you see how farcical that would sound? Would it be Mugabe of Zimbabwe or Arap Moi of Kenya who would introduce such a motion? What would be their locus standi for making such a move, when they themselves have been victimising their own citizens?'

Continued this former president, 'Or would it be Obasanjo of Nigeria or Mbeki of South Africa, the so-called powerhouses? Right now, Nigeria is having a lot of problems with its own Muslim population, which is trying to destabilise the country into two countries, one Muslim and one Christian. Obasanjo needs his Arab 'sister states' for some influence on the northern population to stay calm, especially if he wishes to be re-elected to another four-year term.

'Mbeki, on the other hand, has his own problems. He is as yet to fathom how to deal with his white population, especially on the redistribution of land. The Black population cannot continue to wait; what is going on in Zimbabwe is bound to happen in South Africa

unless Mbeki begins to address this issue seriously and judiciously. It is bound to explode in his face.’ ‘But, let me tell you,’ he continued, ‘the most serious problem right now, it is the problem of poverty and the fact that a lot of the African countries are beholden to their so-called sister states, especially their dependence on Libya’s Muammar Gaddafi.’⁴

‘Let me give you one scenario of an Organization of African Unity meeting, where, for instance, Mbeki or his representatives would dare to introduce a discussion of slavery in Africa. Do you know who would be first to oppose such a discussion? Of course, Sudan itself. The OAU’s decisions are based on unanimity, and if one country opposes, then that issue is dead.’

‘With the discovery of oil in Sudan, which has impacted greatly on incrementally escalating the abductions of Black Africans in the south by the Arab-based government in Khartoum, most East African countries have become increasingly dependent on cheap oil supply from the Sudan. It raises the issue of responsibility of guilt, of Africans selling their own brothers and sisters for a necklace of beads or a mirror. Now, unlike 500 years ago, it is no longer beads, mirrors or machetes, but Africans are now settling for the supply of oil in exchange for the continuance of slavery on the African continent.

‘Even if it were not,’ argued the former president, ‘and that representative went ahead to bring the issue of slavery for discussion, then Libya, a sister Arab state, might object. And do you know how many African countries are beholden to Libya?’ he queried. ‘Listen, a lot of Black African leaders are in the pocket of Muammar Gaddafi. He has lots of money to spend on these leaders. Fortunately, despite the sanctions that have been imposed on Libya, Gaddafi has been able to husband his financial resources better than a majority of Black African leaders, who prefer Swiss bank accounts and palaces in Europe. A lot of the Black African leaders have put themselves in a position where a little amount of money could mean life and death, and ultimately influences how they make their decision, in this case selling out Black Africans. Let them continue to be slaves to Arabs, so far as we continue to get these little crumbs from our Arab “sister states”.’

Most Africans believe that the current crop of African leaders are not capable and are frightened of confronting the Arab leaders, and the issue of slavery in Sudan will never be solved unless the Western nations decide to bring pressure to bear on the Sudan government to halt the practice. They believe that the only man who has the moral courage to confront the Arabs, and bring an end to the issue of Arab slavery and atrocities in Black Africa, is the same man who confronted the heinous apartheid regime and won, and that man is Nelson Mandela.

- 2 The OAU was replaced in 2001 by the African Union (AU).
- 3 Professor Mbabuike died in 2006.
- 4 Gaddafi died in October 2011, during the Libyan civil war.

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INNATE HATRED OF AFRICANS BY ARABS

My suspicion about the London bombings (7 July 2005) might be different from others, but I believe that the attacks disrupted discussions about what the world was trying to do for Africa.

The dastardly and barbaric bombings in London have once again demonstrated the innate Arab hatred of Africans. Of course, I need to state from the onset that I am not a fan of the G8 gathering at Gleneagles, Scotland, to discuss how Africa's debt burden should be resolved. In an earlier piece, I pointed out the differences between the modes of relief that are being offered – the debt recollection/cancellation, which I favour, against the debt relief, which is what is being touted. I had also expressed my displeasure at Live 8 (2 July 2005), which, though well-meaning on the part of its organisers, nevertheless reduces Africans to the perpetual status of continual poverty – albeit degradingly truthful nevertheless.

In fact, here is an email I received from Victoria Darrah in California on this issue: 'I have been perusing your website anxiously waiting for your comments on these Live 8 concerts that happened over the weekend. Have you been following the hoopla? Something about it hit me as very wrong, it was all so patronising, as though they have the answers for Africa. It is good to focus on Africa, but to focus so intensely on poverty does not sit well with me. What really irritated me was the fact that they thought African artists did not deserve to be on the same stage as the Western groups, and after the organizers were criticized they had to set up an all-African concert in S. Africa to placate us. How rude!' She said it all. Victoria is originally from Uganda.

I have no doubt in my mind that the dastardly act in London was a calculated attempt to once again shove Africa's issues aside and monopolise the news with the Arab cause. These Arab terrorists don't believe that African issues matter much to them, because they don't value African lives, believing that we are still the same slaves they used to cart away, and still cart away in Sudan and Mauritania. The tragedy in all of this is that there are a lot of Africans who myopically support the Arab cause in Iraq, Palestine and elsewhere, while these sentiments are not reciprocated by the Islamic countries as represented in the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).⁵

Today was supposed to be the beginning of a conference of world leaders, under which African issues – for example, the eradication of poverty in Africa – would have occupied centre stage in the discussions. But what do these Arab terrorists do? They chose today to

commit their dastardly act, thereby shunting aside Africa's needs in favour of whatever al-Qaeda is fighting for. Would it be far-fetched, then, for these leaders to turn around and say to Africa, 'Listen, old chap, I am sorry, whatever resources I was going to provide to Africa, I now need them to combat al-Qaeda terrorists?' Wouldn't it be insensitive on our part to look them in the eye and say to them, oh, we must hold you to your promise? Would that be the response of a caring humane people, not to recognise the others' agonies?

When you think about it, you see this pattern of attempts at relegating African issues from the centre stage to the back burner by these perpetrators. In the past fifteen years, Africans have become cannon fodder for these Arab terrorists. On 7 August 1998, Arab terrorists led by Osama bin Laden ignored the presence of American embassies in many Arab nations, but chose to bomb two in Africa – in Kenya and Tanzania – where they killed almost 300 people and wounded more than 5 000. Not only was this act a way of telling Africans, listen fools, we don't value your lives, but you can't do any shit about our brazen effrontery. To add insult to injury, not one of the Islamic countries condemned the bombings. The families of those who were killed were never compensated by the Arab countries, and just last year US courts threw out the suit brought by African families to get some compensation from the American government. Nobody paid for the rebuilding of the properties lost by Africans, but the American government of course compensated the families of the 12 Americans who died in the bombings.

As we saw in Chapter 6,⁶ when Egypt and Syria launched Operation Badr in October 1973, none of the Black African countries were consulted, but, as the outcome would later indicate, Black African leaders became pawns in the Arab war with Israel. Arab leaders exploited the ferment of Africa's angst towards South Africa and Rhodesia to manipulate the leaders into breaking off diplomatic relations with Israel. The Arab countries even pledged more than \$1 billion to compensate African countries for possible Western retaliation. Yet none of the African countries would receive a cent of the promised \$1 billion.

Nothing has changed; it is either using Africans as pawns in the larger Arab-Israeli conflict, wantonly killing innocent Africans because we are unable to lift a finger in retaliation, or selecting a time when world leaders are focused on African issues to bomb London so that Africa will not be the top topic in the news ladder. If this is not innate hatred of Africans by these Arabs, I need to be convinced.

5 Formerly Organization of the Islamic Conference.

6 Also published as 'Rape of a Race', African Sun Times, 13-19 December 2001.

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NIGERIA'S OBASANJO: THE WOUNDED PRESIDENCY

In 2002, members of the Nigerian House of Representatives voted to demand that President Olusegun Obasanjo resign within two weeks. My view was that it was a meaningless vote, as Obasanjo had been elected overwhelmingly in 1999.

On Tuesday 13 August, Nigerians tested their nascent democracy to its most dangerous limit, when members of the House of Representatives passed a resolution demanding that the President, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, resign within two weeks or face impeachment proceedings. Said the motion, 'Chief Olusegun Obasanjo is hereby advised to resign honourably ... within two weeks from the date of this motion, failing which the House will commence impeachment proceedings', passed by an overwhelming majority in the 360-member House. What is significant in the House motion is that Obasanjo's party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), controls both the House and the Senate. Out of 360 members, the PDP has 196 members in the House, as well as 63 members in the Senate.

Chief Obasanjo was elected as the first civilian president of Nigeria in 1999, after sixteen years of dictatorial military rule ended with the death of General Sani Abacha, in 1998, and the assumption of the office of Head of State by General Abdulsalami Abubakar. General Abubakar immediately vowed to return Nigeria to a democratic civilian government. He quickly instituted the process for a series of elections, culminating in the election of a civilian president. President Obasanjo himself was the first military man to have handed power peacefully to a civilian elected president, in 1979, having served as military Head of State from 1976 to 1979.

Obasanjo was overwhelmingly elected with the support of the two main ethnic groups in Nigeria, the Hausa-Fulanis of the North and the Igbos of the South East. The third major ethnic group, the Yorubas of the South West, of which Chief Obasanjo is a member, voted overwhelmingly against him. The group's main political party, the Alliance for Democracy (AD), swept all the polls in the West. As an example, in Lagos State, former capital of Nigeria, the AD candidate, Chief Olu Falae, polled more than 2 million votes to Obasanjo's 210 000 votes. In fact, Obasanjo lost the election in his own local government area (LGA) to the same Olu Falae.

The two groups that elected him, together with members of the South-South area, which includes the oil-producing areas of Nigeria – the country's breadbasket – are the groups that are now increasingly disenchanted with the Obasanjo presidency. They have become

increasingly critical of his policies, his manner of addressing Nigerians, his contempt for members of the House and Senate, his taking of unilateral decisions that, in a democracy, should be taken by the two arms of the government – the executive and the legislative – and have even accused his administration of major corruption. In 2001, Nigeria was named the second most corrupt country in the world by Transparency International, of which Obasanjo was a member before being jailed by the former dictator General Sani Abacha. In fact, Alhaji Ghali Na'Abba, Speaker of the House of Representatives, which passed the motion, and a member of the Hausa-Fulani group, has accused Obasanjo of outright dictatorship.

But what has enraged lawmakers, as well as most Nigerians, is Obasanjo's trips abroad. According to newspaper accounts, Obasanjo has travelled about 103 times since he came to office in May 1999, and spent more than 360 days outside Nigeria, compared to 98 trips for Pope John Paul II, who was elected in 1978. Said one of the legislators voting for the motion, the Honourable Sule Yari Gandi, 'today our President has been reduced to a mere ambassador. If there is going to be a cultural dance in Barbados, it is Obasanjo that will go there. If there is going to be a burial ceremony in Botswana, it is President Obasanjo that will be there. In the last three years, President Obasanjo has operated 361 days in the air, which means out of three years, one year was spent in the air, two years on the ground.' Given the problems that Obasanjo faces, the question, then, is whether he is in any danger of losing his presidency through the impeachment process? The answer is absolutely NO. Given the intricacies of Nigerian politics and the provisions of the constitution, Obasanjo is not in any danger of being impeached.

On the other hand, internationally the Obasanjo presidency has suffered a severe, not mortal, wound. As much as Obasanjo can shrug off the threats by the members of the House, and despite the support he is receiving from the Nigerian public, what has been engineered and achieved by the House vote is the perception of a president who has lost the confidence of his people.

The impeachment motion would have been meaningless to most African presidents, except maybe to a President Mbeki, representing the other powerhouse of democracy in Africa. But not to President Obasanjo, who seems to have bet his presidency and how he is judged on how he performs internationally – always a dangerous road, as presidents like the elder Bush learnt the hard way.

Obasanjo is front and centre in the so-called North-South dialogue, the G77 group, Africa's attempt to wrestle \$64 billion from the G8 countries through the new NEPAD, and then, of course, the OAU's changeover to the African Union. In all of these institutions,

Obasanjo sincerely believes it is his absolute right, as president of the so-called giant of Africa, Nigeria, to be a leader. Before Boutros Boutros-Ghali was elected as Secretary-General of the United Nations, Obasanjo was one of those whose names were being mentioned as a candidate for that exalted office.

With presidents Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and Abdulaziz Bouteflika of Algeria, Obasanjo led the development of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), with its main objective and strongest recommendation being the advocacy of good and transparent governance. At the last G8 meeting, in Canada,⁷ it was Obasanjo who spoke on behalf of the five African presidents who attended the meeting – Mbeki, Wade and Bouteflika, as well as Mubarak of Egypt. Given Obasanjo's unbridled ambition as an international statesman, it is difficult to see how other world leaders would look at him and say, yes, you are that epitome of good and transparent governance and you definitely operate with the blessing of the populace; after all, these leaders understand that democracy is for the people and by the people, as represented by their legislators. And the legislators have spoken otherwise. Conversely, the legislators might have achieved their aim of stopping what they couldn't achieve through legislation when they barred Obasanjo from his frequent trips abroad. The type of publicity that the impeachment motion generated around the world could only have been matched by that of a coup d'état. In other words, every foreign leader heard the 'gunshot' fired by the legislators, and they would have a hard time justifying an invitation to Obasanjo for a visit.

When somebody is always in your house begging for this or that, or merely stopping by for meaningless chitchat, your respect for that individual begins to fade, as you wonder whether he really has anything meaningful to do. Unfortunately, even before this alarming episode in an already destabilising environment, Nigeria's light had started to fade, while that of South Africa has started to shine even brighter, and ultimately that of its president, Thabo Mbeki. South Africa is increasingly seizing the issues, as well as the solutions, for which Nigeria had originally been depended upon to articulate and solve.

In the latest rounds of peace initiatives in Africa, and where those peace initiatives are being held, Nigeria has become a non-player. In fact, nobody could accuse Thabo Mbeki of leading a 'travelling circus', as one Asian ambassador described Obasanjo. The West is turning increasingly to South Africa to make the decisions that Nigeria used to be depended upon to make. In the last two years, most of the important conferences have been held in South Africa; whether it is the racism conference, the Organization of African Unity's last

meeting before becoming the African Union and now the World Summit on Sustainable Development,⁸ the world wants a peaceful environment and an infrastructure capable of handling large conferences without hitch. It is estimated that more than 50 000 people will be attending the Sustainable Development conference. It is possible that Obasanjo only listens to his own drumbeat; he has already said he will defy the ultimatum given to him by the House of Representatives to resign in two weeks. But the sad part is that here is a man for whom millions of Nigerians had invested all their hopes to lift them out of sixteen years of military misrule, but instead have seen their hopes dashed by the intransigence of the two arms of government.

Obasanjo has announced he will be running for a second term of four years, but, with the present two major groups in Nigeria distancing themselves from him, it is doubtful he will succeed, if matched with a relatively decent candidate and if a free and fair election is held. But money plays a major role in Nigerian politics, and, by utilising his incumbency and financial war chest, it is possible he may win a second term. But wouldn't it be a mockery for a person who has spent his whole civilian life preaching the need for democracy and transparency in elections? Well, c'est la vie.

7 Held 26-27 June 2002.

8 Held in Durban and opened on 26 August 2002.

7 Held 26-27 June 2002.

8 Held in Durban and opened on 26 August 2002.

AFRICAN JUDGES VS DICTATORIAL AND LAWLESS PRESIDENTS

The dismissal of Deputy President Jacob Zuma in June 2005 could have generated a great crisis in South Africa. Instead, Zuma went on to become the country's democratically elected president. The situation has been quite different in Nigeria and Malawi, as I wrote in a 2007 column.

In a series of rulings, African judges seem to be asserting their independence, by checkmating the excesses of lawless and dictatorial presidents. The rulings reflect relatively recent constitutional changes from the anachronistic British parliamentary system of governance to the American presidential system. This is unlike the French system adopted by most of the Francophone African countries, in which an elected president appoints a prime minister, who then appoints the ministers – with the express permission and approval of the president, of course.

However, in countries formerly governed by Britain, the only system that approximates the French system is in South Africa. But it differs in that the elected president appoints not only the deputy president but also the ministers, whom he can fire without recourse to any other body of authority. The 2005 dismissal of Deputy President Jacob Zuma by President Thabo Mbeki is a case in point. Jacob Zuma is a very popular figure in South Africa, so his firing could have generated a great crisis in the country, but it didn't happen.

On Tuesday 14 June 2005, President Mbeki, in a dramatic move, announced that he had relieved Jacob Zuma of his responsibilities as deputy president. The dismissal took place in the wake of the corruption trial of Zuma's financial adviser, Schabir Shaik, which appeared to have implicated the deputy president. Mbeki said that he had taken the decision to defend South Africa's 'young democracy'. Addressing a special sitting of Parliament, he said: 'In the interest of the honourable deputy president, the government, our young democratic system and our country, it would be best to release the honourable Jacob Zuma from his responsibilities as deputy president of the republic and member of the Cabinet.' Mbeki also emphasised that Zuma must be presumed innocent. Of course, at that time, most people assumed that Zuma was the heir apparent to succeed Mbeki, who had made it clear that he would not run for a third term.

In reacting to his dismissal, Zuma had this to say: 'I believe [Mbeki] has taken this decision not because he believes I am guilty of any crime but because of considerations relating to the constraints within which government operates.' It is the mutual understanding

and respect that these two individuals had for each other that made the dismissal less of an issue than it would have been elsewhere. Of course, on 8 May 2006 a South African judge proceeded to dismiss rape charges against Zuma, including the most egregious – that of raping a woman who is HIV positive, an encounter Zuma termed ‘consensual sex’. But the court ruling had nothing to do with the upholding or abrogation of the constitutional provisions of the country.⁹

Now, we come to the cases of two countries that have abandoned the anachronistic British system and which seem to have modelled their constitutions on the American system. I speak of one of the smallest countries in Africa, Malawi, and the most populous, Nigeria, whose population appears to have ballooned to 140 million – twice that recorded in 1991. In both countries, the presidents have dismissed their vice presidents, who were elected with them into office, for different reasons. Unlike the rather ‘friendly’ dismissal of Jacob Zuma, these two dismissals were the outcomes of acrimonious relationships.

Without going into a detailed analysis of the US Constitution, suffice it to say that the vice president elected with the president, members of the Cabinet, and the judiciary appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate, can be removed from office only through impeachment, but in most cases Cabinet members prefer to ‘resign’ rather than be dismissed. Hence we are always reading of the president accepting the ‘resignation’ of such-and-such a Cabinet member.

In the case of Malawi, on Thursday 9 February 2006 President Bingu wa Mutharika announced on state radio that he had dismissed his vice president, Cassim Chilumpha, for, among other reasons, ‘arrogance, abrogating on his constitutional duties and violating his oath of office’. The president also alleged that the vice president was trying to run a parallel administration. The interesting thing about this case is that both Dr Mutharika and Mr Chilumpha belonged to the same party, the United Democratic Front (UDF), founded by former president Bakili Muluzi. Although Muluzi had had violent disagreements with Mutharika, he nevertheless picked him as his replacement and campaigned vigorously for him. This was after the voters in Malawi had, in a referendum, rejected Muluzi’s attempts to change the constitution and run for a third term.

But no sooner did Mutharika take office than he reopened his dispute with Muluzi, including launching an investigation of the former president for corruption. Mutharika’s so-called anti-corruption crusade also involved levelling accusations against members of his party for sabotaging his efforts. Mutharika resigned from the UDF and

then founded his own party, the Democratic Progressive Party, though without resigning as president of the country. Attempts were made to remove him through impeachment, which didn't succeed because of court rulings.

In reaction to his alleged dismissal by the president, Chilumpha had this to say: 'As far as I am concerned I can only leave this office through impeachment, resignation or my death and none of those things has happened so I am still the elected vice-president of this republic.'

Before we bring in the rulings of the Malawian courts, let's examine the goings-on in Nigeria, where President Olusegun Obasanjo announced on Saturday 23 December 2006 that he had sacked his vice president, Abubakar Atiku. The sacking was the result of a long-running feud between the two men. In the latter part of 2005, Nigerians were surprised to learn that President Obasanjo was plotting to remain in office, something he neither denied nor confirmed. According to sources at the time, Obasanjo had hinted to Atiku of his ambition and asked for his support, which Atiku allegedly refused to give. Obasanjo then went on national television and accused Atiku of disloyalty. Meanwhile, the plot for Obasanjo to remain in office after 29 May 2007, when his second term was due to end, went into full swing. His denials turned to 'If it is the wish of God that I should remain in office' and 'If the constitution allowed me to remain in office.' But while Obasanjo was campaigning to remain in office after the abrogation of the constitution, Atiku was equally vociferous in campaigning against the president's running for a third term. Obasanjo's party, the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), of which Atiku was a founding member, initially refused to acquiesce to Obasanjo's ambitions for a third term, but later endorsed his ambition.

However, on 16 May 2006, Obasanjo's third-term ambitions were dealt a decisive and crushing defeat by members of the Nigerian Senate, which voted to reject the attempts to amend the Nigerian constitution so that he could run for a third term. But, rather than rising in magnanimity above this shameful attempt to scuttle the Nigerian constitution, as well as the mandate of the new charter of the African Union (AU), of which he supposedly played a major role in crafting, Obasanjo decided to play God. But God himself doesn't look kindly on those who try to act like Him. History looks at people who have tried to play God, and it hasn't been very kind to them, including Hitler, Mussolini, Idi Amin, Emperor Bokassa and Sani Abacha. Abacha played God; he played God when he arrested Obasanjo and clapped him in prison without just cause. There were praise singers and sycophants then who egged him on. There are many praise singers and sycophants today, just as in Abacha's time, who are encouraging

Obasanjo on his destructive path to avenge the defeat of his third-term ambitions. There were individuals who hollered and screamed about Abacha being the best god Nigeria could have, just as you have individuals who hail Obasanjo as the best thing that could happen to Nigeria, despite what he is trying to do to the country.

The individual who has borne Obasanjo's vengeance and vindictive retaliation has become his vice president – Abubakar Atiku. In the same way that the dictatorial and diabolical Abacha hounded him, Obasanjo has employed all the arms of government to hound Atiku, who is not a saint by any means, but nevertheless an individual who stood steadfastly with the Nigerian people in opposition to Obasanjo's third-term ambitions. Obasanjo used a flimsy pretext to set up an inquisition by the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) to level charges of misappropriating more than \$120 million of government funds; he had the PDP, of which Obasanjo had no hand in founding, expel Atiku, a founding member; and on 23 December 2006 he announced to the Nigerian people that he had sacked the vice president and declared the office vacant. Atiku has declared his intention to run for the presidency in 2007 for another political party, forgetting that the PDP had expelled him. Let's remember that in Malawi the president changed parties without resigning.

Dictatorially and lawlessly, without waiting for a court ruling, Obasanjo has proceeded to deny and withdraw all the entitlements of the office of the vice president, including his security detail and his staff – just as under the rule of Sani Abacha. There is a rumor that Obasanjo has ordered Atiku's arrest when he returns from a vacation in the United States. But, for whatever reason, Obasanjo has now gone to the Nigerian courts and enjoined them to validate his illegal actions.

So, we have two similar cases of constitutional quagmires created by lawless and dictatorial presidents taking the law into their own hands. But, fortunately for the continent, African judges seem to be rising to the challenge. On 29 December 2006, the Malawi High Court ruled that President Bingu Wa Mutharika cannot dismiss Vice President Cassim Chilumpha. The court also ruled that Vice President Chilumpha could only be removed from office after being indicted, and that a process of impeachment is required to remove him from Parliament. Following this ruling, President Mutharika has again already started referring to Chilumpha as 'Vice President'.

As Atiku of Nigeria has filed his challenge to Obasanjo's actions, based on the same constitutional provisions as used by Vice President Chilumpha, and as we await the ruling, it feels good to note that some African judges are beginning to exercise their independence and not to use the paper on which their respective constitutions are written as

weapons for excretion.

9 In April 2009 the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) withdrew charges of corruption, fraud and money laundering against Zuma.

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OBASANJO'S TRANSGRESSIONS AGAINST NIGERIA AND NIGERIANS

When the late Nigerian president Umaru Musa Yar'Adua became extremely sick, in 2007, former president Obasanjo chose that moment to call for his resignation. But this was the same Obasanjo who had handpicked Yar'Adua for the position of president, having engineered his selection as his party's standard-bearer for the presidential election, knowing full well that Yar'Adua was suffering from kidney problems and was on dialysis. This article was written as a result of that call and many other acts of injustice he has committed against Nigerians.

A savage debate has erupted in Nigeria over statements made by the former president of the country, Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, calling on the seriously ill president, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, to resign. Obasanjo was quoted as saying, with regard to Yar'Adua: 'If you cannot satisfy yourself, how can you satisfy your family or a nation? And if you cannot satisfy a nation, you can resign, which serves as part of morality, dignity and honour.' Most Nigerians view Obasanjo's populist call, as it reflects the opinion of the majority of Nigerians, as a calculated attempt to mask his greatest transgressions against the Nigerian state and Nigerians: forcing and foisting a very sick individual as president of Nigeria.

The crisis that has engulfed Nigeria is of Obasanjo's own making. Since 23 November President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua has been away from Nigeria receiving medical treatment in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. This is itself a symptom of the fact that for fifty years, since most African countries gained independence from their former colonial masters, African leaders have squandered opportunities to construct quality hospitals capable of taking care of their ailments. Hence they mostly go outside the continent, to Europe, to die. In other words, for 72 days the president of Nigeria has been outside the country, in a hospital in Jeddah, unable to make any decisions affecting the country.

To compound matters, he has refused to have his deputy, Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, declared acting president, due to a provision in his party's by-laws (not Nigeria's constitution, it must be emphasised) that says there must be power rotation between the north and the south. This has led the northern elite to refuse to countenance the vice president, who is from the south, rising to the position of acting president. Understandably and decidedly, Nigerians view Obasanjo's call for the president to resign as hollow.

As I have written many times, former president Olusegun

Obasanjo is a very vindictive individual. Obasanjo hates Nigeria and Nigerians for what they did to him in 2006 – deny him his well-orchestrated grab for power to stay in office for a third term. In 2006, Obasanjo decided to play God, and he played God, aided assiduously by his hand-picked puppet, Nuhu Ribadu of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), who viciously used the authority of the commission to carry out Obasanjo's diabolical programme against those who he felt had betrayed him, by letting loose Ribadu on his opponents and scaring them through accusations of financial malfeasance. It pains me to see Nigerians trying to turn Nuhu Ribadu into a martyr after what he perpetuated on Nigerians in aiding Obasanjo. Hopefully, with the current crisis in the country, Nigerians will come to view Nuhu Ribadu with the true judgement he deserves.

Obasanjo's attempts to play God, his vindictiveness and desire to punish Nigeria and Nigerians for denying him a third term, led him to the door of the then governor of Katsina State, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, a former chemistry lecturer, who, if he was elected, would be the first Nigerian leader ever to finish college. There was nothing wrong with selecting Governor Yar'Adua, except that Obasanjo knew the man was seriously sick. During his recent mea culpa press conference, he admitted knowing that Umaru Yar'Adua was very sick. Confirming how he played God, Obasanjo said, 'Let me tell you what you have never heard before. I knew that Yar'Adua has a kidney problem and was on dialysis, and that he went abroad for treatment when he was the governor of Katsina State. Before I picked him, I asked him questions and he gave me a medical report stating that he was no longer on dialysis. But I consulted medical experts; they told me that if he is not on dialysis, after a successful kidney transplant, then he won't have a problem. So, who are you not to accept that?'

Whether Obasanjo did consult with 'medical experts' is not in question here, but what is in question is his knowledge that Yar'Adua was a man who had serious kidney problems and was on dialysis, and yet he chose, as he himself confessed, to 'pick him'. Having picked a very sick Yar'Adua, he decided to inflict even more damage to Nigerians by selecting another unknown, Goodluck Jonathan, as his running mate. Lest we forget, Jonathan's wife had been arrested and detained in London for money laundering. Both were chosen on 17 December 2006 as the candidates of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP).

If Obasanjo thought he had made the right decision in picking a very sick man to succeed him, he was rudely proved wrong when, on 5 March 2007, while campaigning, candidate Yar'Adua collapsed and had to be rushed to Germany for treatment. At a press conference,

Obasanjo facetiously said he was not satisfied with Yar'Adua's collapse. Quoting Nigeria's Daily Trust newspaper, Obasanjo said, 'We went campaigning but Yar'Adua and the then Chairman of the PDP, Dr Ahmadu Ali, broke down at a campaign ground. Ali was not flown abroad, but Yar'Adua was flown abroad. When the rumours broke that he was dead, I picked up my phone and called him. I said, "Umaru, are you dead?" He told Nigerians that he was alive. At that time, I thought after a successful kidney transplant he was going to be well.' Dr Ali has since denied that he also collapsed.

What should infuriate Nigerians is Obasanjo's concluding remarks at the press conference, when he said, 'I did not support him [Yar'Adua] because of hatred for Nigeria. Why will I do that after I have put so much in this country? So, you can't blame anybody, neither the president. If people said I deliberately picked someone who was incapacitated, invalid, they are wrong.'

'No one picked Yar'Adua so that he will not perform. If I did that out of hatred for this country, God will judge me.'

Obasanjo should be advised to leave God out of what he has done to Nigeria and Nigerians. He tried to play God himself, and God is not looking kindly at him right now, and decidedly Nigerians are not looking kindly at him, either now or in the future. Nigerians know that Obasanjo had the opportunity to repay Nigerians with kindness for allowing him another eight years to rule the country, yet he chose to extend his term of office, and when Nigerians rejected him, he chose a path of destruction for the country. His attempts at absolving himself now do not hold any relevance for Nigerians. He had the opportunity, in the first place, not to 'pick' Yar'Adua as a candidate; in the second place, he had another chance, when Yar'Adua collapsed during campaigning, to have him quit the race; and in the third place he orchestrated one of the most fraudulent elections in history just to have Yar'Adua succeed him, that even Yar'Adua was ashamed of the results.

Obasanjo has no honour and none should be bestowed on him. His transgressions against Nigeria and Nigerians, when the history of this period is written, will be adjudged one of the worst periods in Nigeria's history. It is time that Obasanjo kept his opinions to himself about the affairs of the country.

OBASANJO: WHEN IS CORRUPTION NOT CORRUPTION?

In 2008, then President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria was claiming that he was a fighter against corruption, because he had established the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC). However, most Nigerians came to see the commission as a tool of Obasanjo's to persecute his political opponents.

Nigeria's president, Olusegun Obasanjo, has been touting himself as a fighter against corruption. Earlier in his first term in office, he established the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, (EFCC) and appointed a dynamic young man, Nuhu Ribadu as chairman, to root out corruption in Nigeria. In the initial years of its existence, the commission and Nuhu Ribadu were applauded when they went after what Nigerians considered the bigger fish of corrupt individuals. First, the commission uncovered the looting carried out by the Inspector-General of Police, Tafa Balogun, to the tune of N17 billion (about \$125 million), in a country whose per capita income was estimated in 2005 to be about \$697. Balogun was arrested and charged. The government announced that it had recovered most of the loot, including properties owned by Balogun. But he was sentenced to only six months' imprisonment.

On Tuesday 22 March 2005, President Obasanjo went on national television to express his 'shocking indignation' at, and to 'expose', the then minister of education, Professor Fabian Osuji, whom he accused of having raised a total sum of N55 million (\$380 000) from departments of the education ministry to bribe members of the legislature to increase his ministry's budget. Obasanjo promptly announced that he had sacked the education minister. Also roped into this 'corruption' case was the then Senate president, Adolphus Wabara, who also had to step down. Obasanjo then dismissed a few other ministers for corrupt practices.

But behind the façade of hollering about anti-corruption, and of presenting himself as a champion against corruption in Nigeria, was Obasanjo's hidden agenda: to change Nigeria's constitution and run for a third four-year term, invoking the same useless excuses that other dictatorial African presidents have always invoked: 'I haven't finished my good deeds for the country.' Unfortunately for him, but fortunately for Nigerians, legislators dealt his third-term ambitions a deadly blow, by voting not to amend the constitution so that Obasanjo could run again. Since then, Obasanjo has been on a rampage of vindictive revenge against those who have thwarted his ambitions. However, Obasanjo's travails in the third-term machinations are not

the essence of this article, which I have already dealt with in Chapter 10.

What we have to look at here is the perception that Obasanjo has given to the world that he is a fighter against corruption. Okay, let's agree that, when he took office, in 1999, Nigeria was ranked as the second most corrupt country in the world, just behind Bangladesh, at number one, according to Transparency International. In almost eight years in office, Obasanjo has achieved the 'distinction' of getting Nigeria to number five in the list of the most corrupt countries, after Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Sierra Leone and Pakistan, and just ahead of Kyrgyzstan, Kenya, Congo Republic and Angola, in that order.

As to Obasanjo's credentials or credence in being a champion of anti-corruption, in reviewing the events that follow we have to remember that the former dictator of Nigeria, the late General Sani Abacha, locked up Obasanjo in 1995, and not until Abacha's demise in 1998 was Obasanjo released. Upon his release, he really had nothing except his almost bankrupt farm in Otta.

When is corruption not corruption? It is necessary to ask the question when you begin to examine the actions of a so-called champion of anti-corruption. Take the practice of constructing presidential libraries, like those of US presidents – upon which Obasanjo modelled his own. While he was still in office Obasanjo held a fundraiser to start the construction of his presidential library, to which the state governors contributed more than N100 million each, together with companies directly and deeply involved in doing business with the Nigerian government. Nigeria's Nobel literature laureate, Professor Wole Soyinka, called the exercise 'presidential extortion'. When challenged as to why a sitting president would be peddling his influence with individuals and companies doing business with his government, Obasanjo's excuse, according to an affidavit he filed in response to one of Nigeria's most prominent civil rights leaders, Gani Fawehinmi, was that 'the library did not belong to him but to a legal entity called Olusegun Obasanjo Presidential Library Foundation'. He further went on to state that he had nothing to do with the foundation. But the library bears the name Obasanjo Presidential Library. So, is it corruption when a sitting president, according to Wole Soyinka, extorts money from individuals and companies doing business with his government? Yes, when is it not corruption?

Again, here is a sitting president who was destitute when he came into office, but whose application to open a university was approved in June of 2005. Obasanjo's government regulates such approval through the Federal Executive Council, of which he is the chairman, and through the recommendation of the Nigerian Universities

Commission, the members of which are also appointed by the president. So, where did President Obasanjo get the money, running into the billions, to start the Bells University of Technology? So, I ask again, when is corruption not corruption, or is it only when committed by President Obasanjo?

As I said earlier, the Nigerian president has been on a bitter vindictive rampage against any of those who participated in thwarting his third-term ambitions, and no one has borne the brunt of his anger more than the vice president, Atiku Abubakar, who ferociously fought against the president's third-term ambitions. The president has employed all the instruments of the Nigerian government to persecute this man, going so far as to arrogantly and unilaterally declare the post of vice president vacant, without regard to Nigeria's constitution, which, among other provisions, specifically states that the vice president can only be removed through impeachment. Misusing the EFCC, which had earlier been applauded by Nigerians, but is now seen as an instrument of persecution, Obasanjo had the commission charge the vice president with corruption for 'misapplying' a sum of \$125 million from the Petroleum Technology Development Fund. It turned out that the money had been deposited in different Nigerian banks, yielding interest for the country. Unfortunately for Obasanjo and Nuhu Ribadu, the Nigerian courts have looked at these charges and stopped the duo from proceeding with prosecuting Atiku Abubakar.

The vice president, on his part, has fought back, and has charged the president with being corrupt. When the governor of Plateau State ran afoul of the president and was charged with corruption and misuse of state funds, it was Atiku Abubakar who charged that the governor had given N100 million to the president and his election campaign. After this revelation by the vice president, Obasanjo quickly returned N50 million to the state. So, I ask again, when is corruption not corruption, or is it only when committed by President Obasanjo?

Again, the vice president blew the whistle on Obasanjo's purchase of 200 million shares of a new corporate behemoth, Transcorp, formed under his direction and patterned on the 'Asian Tigers' – the huge Asian companies that started from scratch. Yes, a sitting president bought 200 million shares of a company; he summoned corporate leaders to his office and asked them to form the corporation. Transcorp proceeded to be awarded oil blocks, and to acquire the Nigerian Hilton Hotel and Nigerian Telecommunications Ltd (Nitel) for a song. At an issuing rate of N7.50, the value of the 200 million Transcorp shares purchased by Obasanjo would have amounted to N1.5 billion. Obasanjo's defence was that the shares were purchased,

as in the case of his presidential library, by the same Obasanjo Foundation. Could you just imagine the uproar that would engulf a United States president if he was found buying shares in a company he had been instrumental in forming? We are talking of a destitute president, who makes less than N3 million a year, buying N1.5 billion worth of stock. Where did President Obasanjo get the funds to purchase the 200 million shares? And I ask again, when is corruption not corruption, or is it only when committed by President Obasanjo?

Just a few weeks ago, Vice President Atiku again dropped another bombshell, and revealed that President Obasanjo has expanded his farm ownership from one almost bankrupt farm to six, in different geo-political regions of the country, at a cost of a whopping N2 billion. Here again is a president clearly misusing his office, and he has not denied that the six farms cost N2 billion. But his acolytes have come out to say that he got a loan from three banks – the same banks that his government regulates, the same banks that receive the bulk of Nigeria's newfound wealth in deposits. The question, then, is where did President Obasanjo get the collateral to convince these banks of his creditworthiness? So, I ask again, when is corruption not corruption, or is it only when committed by President Obasanjo?

Given the above, it is time that Nigerians stop President Obasanjo from continuing to orchestrate this charade of being a champion of anti-corruption. He needs to come clean, and to own up to his hands being as dirty as those he has accused, or at least, in the main, to stop insulting the intelligence of Nigerians with this hollow sloganeering of being an anti-corruption champion.

If Nuhu Ribadu, who has been acclaimed for his steadfastness in rooting out corruption, wants to retain any iota of credibility, he should charge Obasanjo with corruption. It is not enough to pretend that he is 'investigating' the president. He already has enough wrongdoings to charge the president with corruption, or, if he is pressured from doing so, to resign his post in protest. There should never be a time when corruption should not be seen as corruption, whether it involves President Obasanjo or anyone else.

IS CHINA'S INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA IMPERIALISTIC?

I started warning about China's imperialistic tendencies towards Africa long before it became the main topic of discussion, not only from Westerners but also from Africans themselves. In the conclusion of my address to the Black Management Forum on 13 October 2005, I warned of 'a new kind of slavery marching through Africa – it is the economic giant called China'.

It has become an axiom of faith that, these days, no week passes by without a major Western newspaper, magazine, television news programme or radio show commenting on the Chinese penetration of Africa, and especially how the Chinese are snapping up Africa's important natural resources on the cheap. In fact, the word these Western commentators are most likely to use is 'pillaging' Africa's natural resources. In February 2007, African leaders gathered in the sunny French Riviera city of Cannes. According to an Associated Press article, titled 'African Union Bemoans Continent's Image', 'French president Jacques Chirac recited a list of challenges that lie ahead for Africa and the international community, not least how to tap but not squander its natural resources – most recently being sought by China, India and others.' (The emphasis is mine.) Chirac continued, 'Africa is rich, but Africans are not. The continent holds one-third of the planet's mineral reserves. It is a treasure trove. But it must be neither pillaged nor sold off cheaply.' (Again, the emphasis is mine.)

On 6 February 2007, there was a news report that the US president, George W Bush, had authorised the establishment of a 'command centre for Africa' to oversee US military activities on the continent. 'This new command', said Bush, 'will strengthen our security cooperation with Africa.' The US, he said, would 'consult' with Africa later, yet he had talked of 'cooperation with Africa' earlier. In analysing this new US initiative, a BBC correspondent stated that 'The US gets more than 10 per cent of its oil from Africa and is worried about increased economic and diplomatic competition from China'. Anyway, views or criticisms about Chirac or Bush are not the essence of this chapter, which considers the question as to whether China's involvement in Africa is imperialistic.

In November that year, a delegation of US and African experts visited Beijing. They concluded that China's aggressive courtship of Africa could 'benefit the poor continent' (mark the word 'poor'), but observed that 'shady Chinese businessmen and no-questions-asked aid policies' could backfire on Beijing. The delegation, which had gone to Beijing to discuss the 'different approaches to Africa', endorsed the

observation that ‘Chinese aid policies in Africa have drawn criticism from some Western aid donors who say Beijing is undermining global efforts to foster reforms and good governance and supporting brutal governments in states such as Sudan or Zimbabwe’.

A Stephen Morrison, head of the Africa Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a Washington think tank, was quoted as saying, ‘There is a need for a more strategic approach by the United States if a costly and damaging and unnecessary US-China clash is to be avoided.’ In a preview of a study by the CSIS, according to the article, ‘the delegation also warned China against naiveté or undue optimism about the troubled [mark the word ‘troubled’] continent and China’s role there’. A so-called business adviser, one Anthony Carroll, said that he had warned Chinese officials about ‘bad actors and trade practices that affect China’s reputation’.

My God! Another 1884 European scramble for Africa, but this time between the United States and Europeans on the one hand, and China on the other? At least as far as I know, 10 per cent of the African population of over 900 million people are well educated, yet issues are being discussed as if we don’t exist.

On 9 January 2007, in the online journal of the Zabalaza Anarchist Communist Front, Lucien van der Walt and Michael Schmidt, under the title ‘Is China Africa’s New Imperialist Power?’, wrote that ‘there is a more serious question we have to ask, one with implications beyond [South Africa’s] borders: Will China replace Britain as South Africa’s imperialist power, a changing of the guard, so to speak – leading to South Africa embarking on military expeditions in Africa to protect Chinese capitalist interests? All serious anti-imperialists must consider and plan for the possibility of Africa becoming the future battleground between US-backed Western and Chinese expansionist interests, and unite the continent’s people in a battle against the oil barons.’

Of course, I could continue quoting articles upon articles about how the Western powers are frothing at the mouth about the Chinese presence in Africa, to which they have now begun to refer more derisively as ‘invasion’ and ‘imperialistic’. When you hear the jingoism of fear and anti-Chinese presence in Africa from the likes of Jacques Chirac, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and George W Bush, you wonder in amazement about this newfound love for Africa, from the same group that has pillaged Africa, not only in terms of its raw materials but also its human lives, through brutal slavery that they now have the temerity to warn Africa about.

It is self-evident to state that the Chinese have landed in Africa. Of course the Chinese have landed in Africa. But the question and the

debate that Africans should engage in is whether the Chinese have come as benefactors or as imperialists. I hate to see this debate being orchestrated by the Western world (press), while Africans, as usual in our lackadaisical manner, engage in useless and meaningless discussion. Africa is being foisted with another 'scramble' for our continent's resources. At least in 1884 we could proffer the excuse that we didn't understand what was going on. As I said earlier, with more than 10 per cent of the African population being well educated, this type of excuse will do a great disservice to our continent, as well as to future generations of Africans, who will ask how we stood by with our eyes wide open and let another 'Scramble for Africa' take place.

I remember sounding the same type of alarm in my keynote address to the Black Management Forum on 13 October 2005, when I stated, 'Finally, I must sound this note of warning to Africa: there is a new kind of slavery marching through Africa – it is the economic giant called China. Yes, it is stimulating and exciting seeing the competition the Chinese are giving to the Western world in Africa. But we are again abandoning our independence for a quick solution to our economic woes. Africa needs to suffer a little if we are going to build a solid economic base for the generation of Africans to come. First, it was slavery, then colonialism, and now we are letting economic slavery into the door. In the past, we could make the excuse that our forefathers and fathers were not in a position to know or do anything about it. We can't say the same thing now that we don't know what is going on. We don't want to mortgage the future of our children for a quick-fix economic solution.'

Of course, before we attack or defend the Chinese presence in Africa, it is necessary that we analyse how the Chinese themselves see their involvement in Africa, how African leaders see the Chinese involvement, how the projects that the Chinese are carrying out in Africa are different from those of Africa's former colonial masters or the US and the West's conditional aid to Africa, and how (or if) the Chinese are interfering in the internal affairs of African countries.

For one thing, far from being imperialistic, the Chinese see their presence in Africa as similar to a knight in shining armour galloping to rescue us from the treacherous West, which has used military, religious and commercial might to reduce the continent to penury, and continues to attach 'conditionalities' to the pittance of aid that they give to Africa. Such aid is taken back immediately in another form, by insisting that we purchase their products, or by allowing corrupt African leaders to lodge their stolen booty in Western banks. According to China's deputy foreign minister, rather than the Chinese presence being exploitive and imperialistic, his government 'wanted to

conduct mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation with African countries' and 'will vigorously encourage Chinese enterprises to participate in improving infrastructure in African countries'. Finally, he insisted that 'China's economic aid for African countries is free of political conditions and is based on African countries' priorities'. Other Chinese leaders have gone on to articulate similar sentiments, especially orchestrated by high-powered visits to various African countries.

Africans have eyes, and they can see the difference between what the Chinese are doing in Africa – building infrastructure such as railways, dams, hydroelectric projects and highways – and the exploitive nature of the Western presence in Africa, which amounts to nothing but the continued extraction of Africa's natural resources. The Western presence has left the continent with nothing but poverty and environmental degradation, especially in the oil-rich countries in which Western companies operate.

As to how African leaders feel about the Chinese presence in the continent, the only answer I can give is that 48 of them trooped to Beijing in November 2006, where they were extravagantly fêted by the Chinese, with displays of giant-size animal murals and performances by cheerleaders. They came away with a promise that the Chinese would forgive the continent \$1 billion in debt. Particularly for countries that have been blacklisted by the West, such as Sudan, Zimbabwe or Equatorial Guinea, the Chinese are a godsend. Some of our leaders are ecstatic about the Chinese presence and the competition that China is giving to the United States and its Western allies. Their loans to African countries don't have the same conditionalities that the West attaches to its loans.

Having said all of the above, the question remains as to whether China's presence in Africa is as a benefactor or an imperialist. Let me say here that there is nothing altruistic about what China is doing in Africa. China is an imperialist country, as imperialistic as its Western counterparts. It is imperialistic because Africans have not done the same thing that the Chinese did to become what they are today – control who comes in or doesn't come in, as the Chinese did for almost three decades, or how they come in. China is imperialistic, just like its Western counterparts, because it needs the natural resources of Africa, in exchange for which it dumps vast amounts of its manufactured products in Africa, and exports large numbers of people, to the extent that there are now an estimated 3 million Chinese in Africa.

Am I advocating, then, that Africa cease its relationship with China? Absolutely not. Any day, I prefer the Chinese economic model of interaction with Africans. A built infrastructure can never be uprooted and taken home, just in case Africans wake up one day and

decide to kick out the Chinese. We cannot say the same about the West; they have practically no meaningful presence in Africa, except for what is needed to extract our natural resources and take them back to their respective countries, and then to manufacture and send the finished goods back to us.

But what we as Africans don't want is Africa as a battlefield, between America and its Western allies on the one hand and China on the other. We should call the bluff of the Western powers and their hypocrisy, and the African Union should tell them in no uncertain language to mind themselves. As I said earlier, Africans should be in the forefront of this debate; we don't want anybody to pull the wool over our eyes ever again. We are capable of thinking for ourselves, and we should not allow ignorant Western-minded so-called experts, or the Chinese themselves, to define this debate for us.

CHINA AND OPPRESSIVE GOVERNMENTS IN AFRICA

It is unfortunate. Africans are so happy about the role the Chinese are playing in Africa that they forget that China closed its borders to foreigners for more than a quarter of a century so that it could regain its true independence. Of course, we know that China is not an open society and that everything is government-controlled. Hence they don't think it is abominable to deal with oppressive governments in Africa. I pointed this out in 2008 with regard to their allowing arms to go to dictatorial regimes on the continent.

The cargo that the Chinese ship *An Yue Jiang* was carrying included 3 million rounds of 7.62 mm ammunition, 1 500 rocket-propelled grenades and more than 3 000 mortar bombs and rocket launchers.

Even before the High Court ruling that barred the arms from being transported across South African territory, South African dockworkers at the port of Durban had refused to unload the cargo, which was to have been taken by road to Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwe military had ordered the arms during the disputed elections of 29 March, ostensibly for use in intimidating the opposition and its supporters. However, according to the South African defence minister, the shipment had been approved by the government's National Conventional Arms Control Committee. He said that 'this is a normal transaction between two sovereign states and we don't have to interfere'.

But a spokesperson for the South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union (Satawu) reacted angrily and said: 'We do not believe it will be in the interest of the Zimbabwean people in general if South Africa is seen to be a conduit of arms and ammunition into Zimbabwe at a time when the situation could be described as quite volatile.'

Reacting to the controversy surrounding the shipment, Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Jian Yu defended the shipment, and hoped that there wouldn't be any attempt at politicising the arms cargo. 'This is normal trade in military products between the two countries. The relevant contract was signed last year and has nothing to do with the situation in Zimbabwe,' she said to reporters in Beijing.

'As Zimbabwe could not receive the cargo as scheduled, China Ocean Shipping Corp [China's state-owned shipping company] had to give up the Durban port and is now considering carrying back this cargo,' she said.

From Zimbabwe, the justice minister Patrick Chinamasa, representing the ruling ZANU-PF party, defended the arms imports.

‘It’s our sovereign right to defend ourselves, it’s our sovereign right to buy weapons from any legitimate source worldwide and we don’t need clearance from anyone.’

After the ship left Durban, it was rumoured that it would be going to Angola, whose president is very friendly with Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe. But when we contacted Angolan officials in New York, they assured us that their government had refused the ship authorisation to dock in Angolan waters.

Because of international pressure, China has now decided to recall the ship to China.

The Chinese arms shipment to Zimbabwe, at a crisis point in the country’s history, calls into question the relationship between the Chinese and Africa, and the way they view Africans as pawns in their chessboard of international manipulation. The Chinese are arguing that the contract for the shipment was concluded last year (2007), but it decided to effect the shipment at this time without pausing to think what the arms might be used for, or to take into consideration the volatile situation in Zimbabwe.

The Chinese cannot pretend to be unaware of the situation in Zimbabwe. The election held on 29 March was, I must acknowledge, largely free and fair. The opposition won 107 seats in the 210-seat parliament, giving them a majority and denying Robert Mugabe’s ZANU-PF control of the legislative process.

Unfortunately, the presidential election result has yet to be announced, although from all evidence it is apparent that President Mugabe has lost the election. How do I come to this conclusion? Well, let’s just recount what has been going on. Immediately after the election, ZANU-PF held an emergency meeting, in which it decided that the party would participate in a run-off. This was before the vote for the presidency was announced. During the celebrations marking twenty-eight years of independence, Mugabe dusted off the old nemesis, Britain, as the culprit for what ails Zimbabwe. As much as I would agree that Britain is culpable in a lot of ways for what went on in Zimbabwe, after twenty-eight years of independence should we continue to accept that old tired cliché? On Wednesday 23 April, an article in the government-controlled newspaper, the Herald, called for a coalition government, but a coalition government headed by the incumbent president, since, as it implied, none of the contestants had won outright, i.e. with more than 50 per cent of the presidential vote. Obviously, given these facts, the government apparatus must have known the results of the presidential election; otherwise, why would they be making these suggestions?

What I have tried to establish here is that the Chinese, as much as they proffer friendship for Africans, are just as manipulative as their

Western counterparts: they are only interested in the natural resources of Africa. They know exactly what the arms they were shipping to Zimbabwe would be used for, but why would they bother about the fact that thousands of Africans might die? African lives are meaningless. They would rather maintain a cordial relationship with an oppressive government than worry about such mundane things as lives being obliterated.

In October 2010, China Dialogue, a non-profit organisation that promotes debate on environmental issues, published an interesting debate between journalist Ning Er, of the Southern Metropolis Daily, and Li Anshan, an international-relations expert at Beijing University, on China's role in Africa. The whole debate is well worth reading,¹⁰ but I offer this extract, in which Li deals with the accusations of colonialism:

NE: But there has been criticism from the international community about China's linking of 'aid' and 'investment' in Africa. The claim is that bundling aid and commercial activity together is a new form of colonialism.

LA: In February 2006, the United Kingdom's foreign secretary [Jack Straw] said during a trip to Nigeria that what China is now doing in Africa is the same as what the British did 150 years ago, and this sparked a discussion about China's 'new colonialism'.

But it's a ridiculous comparison. Colonialism is an application of force, and China is in Africa on a foundation of equality and mutual benefit. In December 2007, I met with Nigeria's consul-general to Hong Kong during a lunch meeting at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. He said that they wanted to do business with China – why? Because we can sit down as equals, to discuss and negotiate, and they don't have that status when dealing with the West.

Or again, due to the unrest in Sudan, other nations pulled out and Sudan came to invite the Chinese in. In 2003, Canadian firm Talisman Energy withdrew from Sudan and CNPC¹¹ wanted to take over Talisman's interests [in an oil pipeline and production project] – but for the sake of diversity the Sudanese government opted to sell to an Indian firm, which was offering a higher price. But this didn't affect CNPC's partnership with Sudan. If China was colonialist, Sudan wouldn't have been able to do this.

During my trip to Mali in April, we visited a sugar company in Ségou, the country's second largest city. The plant was built with Chinese aid, but after completion and handover it failed to make a profit and became a joint venture. The president is a Chinese woman, but the vice president is [Malian], as are many of the senior officials. Once the company was profitable, it was able to make significant improvements to its local area, which is now a small town with a

residential area and a school – it was really moving to see that. One European academic on the trip was dubious, saying aid is aid, business is business, why mix them up? But in fact, whatever you do, as long as the area benefits it's a good thing.

The West's traditional aid model in Africa is in trouble, it's moribund. Meanwhile China has been combining aid and investment since the 1990s, and that has provided huge stimulus to the projects involved. Zambian academic Dambisa Moyo wrote a book last year called *Dead Aid*,¹² which was controversial in the West. She laid into Western aid-giving, saying that the trillion dollars of aid poured into Africa over the last half-century had failed to have any positive outcome – and had, in fact, been damaging. I think the Western model is unsustainable, and China should look to its own experience.

10 'It's not colonialism', parts 1 and 2. China Dialogue, 28 October 2010 Available from www.chinadialogue.net/article/show/single/en/3908--It-s-not-colonialism-1-?utm_source=Chinadialogue+Update&utm_campaign=61b81f8a55-newsletter+01+Nov+2010&utm_medium=email.

11 China National Petroleum Corporation.

12 Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How There is a Better Way for Africa* (Macmillan, 2009)

10 'It's not colonialism', parts 1 and 2. China Dialogue, 28 October 2010 Available from www.chinadialogue.net/article/show/single/en/3908--It-s-not-colonialism-1-?utm_source=Chinadialogue+Update&utm_campaign=61b81f8a55-newsletter+01+Nov+2010&utm_medium=email.

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12 Dambisa Moyo, *Dead Aid: Why Aid is Not Working and How There is a Better Way for Africa* (Macmillan, 2009)

TONY BLAIR'S TROJAN HORSE TO AFRICA

In 2004, Tony Blair, then Britain's prime minister, set up what he called the Commission for Africa, which was to look into the areas of 'economic issues, education, conflict resolution, health, the environment, HIV/Aids and governance'. I was very sceptical of Mr Blair's motives in setting up the commission, given that his poll numbers were going down fast, having joined President George W Bush's invasion of Iraq. I gave reasons why Blair's gift to Africa should be regarded as a 'Trojan horse'.

On 26 February 2004, Prime Minister Tony Blair announced that he was launching an Africa Commission to look at 'economic issues, education, conflict resolution, health, the environment, HIV/Aids and governance'. Said Mr Blair, 'Africa is the only continent to have grown poorer in the last 25 years. Its share of world trade has halved in a generation and it receives less than 1 per cent of direct foreign investment.' 'Forty-four million children', Mr Blair continued, 'do not go to school, millions die through famine or disease or conflict and Africa risks being left even further behind.'

Mr Blair set up the commission, and its report was splashed across the world in March 2005. The findings of the report mirror practically all of the concerns that Africa has continued to express over the years without anybody seeming to listen. I am just going to mention some of the issues, which I will deal with later, including the issue of bogus loans that the West extends to Africa only to allow such loans to be immediately turned around and re-deposited in their banks; how Africa is required to open up its markets to Western products, only to see the same Western nations pour subsidies into some sectors of their economies, thereby making it impossible for Africa to sell its products in their markets and driving nascent African industries out of business; or demanding certain standards of governance before even the bogus loans are extended.

As I said earlier, the report of the Blair Africa Commission has done a marvellous job of highlighting these concerns that Africa has expressed over the years. Africa couldn't have articulated its own case better.

However, I have been sceptical of the commission from the beginning because of the circumstances under which it was set up. We have to remember that Tony Blair, who joined President Bush in invading Iraq under the pretext that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction, was being pummelled at the polls, with more and more Britons expressing dissatisfaction over his job

performance and that of his Labour Party, with the Liberal Democrats increasing their share of votes. What better way, then, to rehabilitate your image than to become the champion of downtrodden Africa?

We also have to recall the dramatic arrival of Mr Blair in Africa in October 2004, just before the publication of the International Survey Group's report on weapons of mass destruction, which confirmed that he had lied about the existence of a military threat in Iraq. On that photo-op visit to Sudan and Ethiopia, Blair piously announced that he would make 1 500 British troops available for deployment in the Darfur region of Sudan, and that Britain would be willing to train 20 000 African soldiers.

Using Africa to prop up one's standing in the polls is not new, but it is the brazen manner in which Tony Blair has exploited his 'hand across to Africa' that has brought out a good number of people, not only Africans, to question his real motive. Said Dr Ian Taylor, a lecturer in African politics at the University of St Andrews in Scotland, 'Africa is ripe for gesture politics because of its low cost financially and low cost politically. It makes good headlines, shows you care and plugs into New Labour imagery. But if nothing is achieved, then no one expected much and they can blame others.'

Even before Mr Blair proposed his Commission for Africa, the Chancellor of the Exchequer (minister of finance), Gordon Brown, had floated a 'Global New Deal', or debt relief, which envisions \$100 billion being made available to poorer countries, most of which are in Africa. But before the ink was even dry on this proposal, the Bush administration had shut it down, DOA. Could we then say that the whole thing is about grandstanding?

Given this background, we can now turn to the findings of the commission:

1. 'Improving accountability', said the report, 'is the job of African leaders. They can do that by broadening the participation of ordinary people in government processes, in part by strengthening institutions like parliaments, local authorities, trades unions, the justice system and the media. Donors can help with this. They can also help build accountable budgetary processes so that the people of Africa can see how money is raised and where it is going. That kind of transparency can help combat corruption, which African governments must root out. Developed nations can help in this too. Money and state assets stolen from the people of Africa by corrupt leaders must be repatriated. Foreign banks must be obliged by law to inform on suspicious accounts. Those who give bribes should be dealt with too; and foreign companies involved in oil, minerals and other extractive industries must make their payments much more open to public scrutiny. Firms who bribe should be refused export credits. Without

progress in governance, all other reforms will have limited impact.'

All these, of course, are axiomatic. African governments and leaders know that these are steps that they need to take; the question is whether the will is there. Can our leaders begin to realise that the treasuries of their respective countries are not their personal banks? This was shown after the death of Nigeria's former dictator Sani Abacha, when the Nigerian Central Bank honoured a cheque for \$2.5 billion that Abacha had written, without so much as asking what the money was being used for.

Then again, we have the case of the billions that African officials have been hiding in European banks. According to the Nigerian president, Olusegun Obasanjo, Africans have stolen and hidden more than \$400 billion of Africa's wealth in Western banks. If the Blair Africa Commission's report is not a sort of shedding of crocodile tears, that is the place it should have started, by demanding that European banks immediately start repatriating this huge amount of money back to Africa. Without even so much as lifting a finger of aid from its past colonial masters, Africa could rid itself of all external debts and still have more than \$80 billion in its credits – as, at present time, Africa's debt amounts to \$315 billion.

2. 'Africa faces two major constraints on trade', says the report. 'It does not produce enough goods, of the right quality or price, to enable it to break into world markets. And it faces indefensible trade barriers which, directly or indirectly, tax its goods as they enter the markets of developed countries.

'To improve its capacity to trade Africa needs to make changes internally. It must improve its transport infrastructure to make goods cheaper to move. It must reduce and simplify the tariff systems between one African country and another. It must reform excessive bureaucracy, cumbersome customs procedures, and corruption by public servants, wherever these exist. It must make it easier to set up businesses. It must improve economic integration within the continent's regional economic communities. Donors can help fund these changes.

'But the rich nations must also dismantle the barriers they have erected against African goods, particularly in agriculture. These barriers hurt citizens in both rich and poor countries. They must abolish trade-distorting subsidies to their agriculture and agribusiness which give them an unfair advantage over poor African farmers. They must lower tariffs and other non-tariff barriers to African products, including stopping the bureaucratic application of rules of origin, which excludes African goods from preferences to which they are entitled. And they must show this ambition by completing the current Doha Round of world trade talks in a way which does not demand

reciprocal concessions from poor African nations. Careful attention must be given to ensure that the poorest people are helped to take advantage of the new opportunities and to cope with the impacts of a more open system of world trade. Africa must be provided with the funds that can help it adjust to the new opportunities of a changed world trading regime.'

Everywhere you look, agriculture is dying in Africa. It is famine everywhere. We have to depend on boatloads of food to help feed the hungry in Africa. It has become a cottage industry for people to collect pittances from all kinds of people to feed the hungry in Africa. But the governments of the West speak with forked tongues, preaching one thing and doing another. They call on African governments to open their markets to Western products, at the same time slamming tariffs on African goods and, worse still, pouring huge amounts of subsidies into the agricultural sector, thereby driving African farmers out of business, and creating the famines that they turn around and try to eradicate. Aren't we playing Russian roulette here?

3. The commission's third theme is around debt relief, and calls for \$25 billion in aid to Africa by the year 2010 – but this must be tied to the advancement of good governance. But the most realistic of the recommendations is that which says: 'For poor countries in sub-Saharan Africa which need it, the objective must be 100 per cent debt cancellation as soon as possible. This must be part of a financing package for these countries – including those excluded from current debt schemes – to achieve the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals), as promised in Monterrey and Kananaskis.'

Tony Blair's ambition for Africa is laudable, but, as Dr Taylor said, making promises to Africa when one is in a precarious situation at home is a pastime of Western leaders, and breaking such promises is not such a big deal. Zimbabwe comes easily to mind – how it was Mr Blair who broke his predecessor's promise to make \$75 million available for land repurchase in Zimbabwe, pinning his actions on Zimbabwe president Robert Mugabe not doing enough for the poor of his country.

In other words, we must look Blair's gift horse in the mouth. We must employ a heavy axe and break this Trojan horse to pieces to ensure there are no hidden agendas (or soldiers) inside. Let's tread carefully in these perilous times.

RACE AND PREJUDICE: WHY IS OBAMA NOT WHITE?

During the 2008 US presidential election campaign, Geraldine Ferraro, the former Congresswoman and vice presidential candidate in 1984, charged that the meteoric rise of Senator Barack Obama was due to his being Black. She had made the same charge against another Black candidate, the Reverend Jesse Jackson. But, in actuality, Obama had been raised white. Why was it that he wasn't regarded as white?

The last several days in the Democratic presidential primaries have been dominated by the foul-mouthed, ignorant and patently racist ranting of a former Congresswoman, Geraldine Ferraro, who was chosen by Walter Mondale as his vice presidential running mate in 1984 – the first woman to represent a major party in a presidential campaign. Ms Ferraro had told a California newspaper, *The Daily Breeze*, that Senator Barack Obama's meteoric performance in the Democratic Party primaries was only due to the fact that he was Black. Her actual statement, 'If Obama was a white man, he would not be in this position. And if he was a woman [of any colour], he would not be in this position. He happens to be very lucky to be who he is.'

When the controversy over her comments burst into the open, she became defiant, said she wasn't going to apologise, and charged that 'Racism works in two different directions. I really think they're attacking me because I'm white. How's that?'

Everybody has been tip-toeing around the fact that Geraldine Ferraro has always been a racist. She is a racist, pure and simple. The chorus has been 'Oh, I have known Gerry for a long time, she's not racist.' Give me a break, as former President Bill Clinton would say.

Pure bunkum! This is the duplicity of the American political class – not calling a spade a spade. The so-called non-racist Gerry Ferraro said the same thing of the Reverend Jesse Jackson in 1988, when she told the *Chicago Tribune's* Frank James, 'If Jesse Jackson were not Black, he wouldn't be in the race.'

It is a pattern that says Blacks can never get anywhere if they are not Black, which conjures the bogey of affirmative action, where Blacks are taking the positions of whites only because they are Blacks. This is of course a pattern that the Clintons have tried to use to steer this campaign, to marginalise Obama's candidacy as a merely Black candidate, appealing only to Black voters.

Coming before the Pennsylvania primary, on 22 April, it certainly looks like a calculated strategy to frighten white voters, who have voted for Obama in droves in so-called red states, where there are hardly any Blacks. As a strategy, it would seem to have worked in the

Mississippi primary, where 74 per cent of white voters voted for Senator Clinton, though on closer examination it really was an improvement for Obama in those southern states.

This brings me to the decidedly disingenuous discussion of race and prejudice, and as to why Obama should not be considered white.

No, no, guys, sheath your swords and let's look at this as civilised individuals. It is Obama's antecedent that makes the ignorance of Geraldine Ferraro so palpable. Of course, an Italian-American like Ferraro, who until recently was not considered a true white, would be quite jealous of the kind of accomplishment that Obama on his own has achieved. If we were to measure what Obama should be called through the life he has lived, he should be attributed with about 75 per cent of white, and 25 per cent of Black.

I know everybody is already shouting blasphemy. But that should be the truth. Let's examine the fact. Barack Obama, Sr, married Obama's mother and they had Obama, Jr. But after only two years, his Black father abandoned him to be raised by his single white mother and his white grandparents. In actual fact, out of Obama's forty-five years of existence, for only two years of his life can we really claim to be our Black. Of course, this is tongue in cheek, as we understand that an ounce of Black blood is all that is needed to classify anyone as Black.

Obama's white family has as much claim on him as he has allowed us to have 100 per cent claim on him. Why shouldn't they? He speaks of his single teenage mother raising him, and then the role being taken over by his white grandparents.

Hence the anger that his late mother would have felt about the public frenzy with which so-called angry white women are attacking her son. For God's sake, she was his mother. A single mother abandoned by her Black husband when she was only twenty years old. But she didn't break down and raise a vagabond as a son. Not only did she not break down – on the contrary – she also achieved a stellar career that allowed her to influence the lives of the indigent, achieving her PhD in the process.

Writing in the International Herald Tribune, Janny Scott of the New York Times wrote of Obama's mother, Stanley Ann Dunham: 'Fluent in Indonesian, Soetoro moved with [daughter] Maya first to Yogyakarta, the center of Javanese handicrafts. A weaver in college, she was fascinated with what Soetoro-Ng calls "life's gorgeous minutiae". That interest inspired her study of village industries, which became the basis of her 1992 doctoral dissertation.

'She became a consultant for the United States Agency for International Development [USAID] on setting up a village credit program, then a Ford Foundation program officer in Jakarta

specializing in women's work. Later, she was a consultant in Pakistan; then she joined Indonesia's oldest bank to work on what is described as the world's largest sustainable microfinance program, creating services like credit and savings for the poor. Visitors flowed constantly through her Ford Foundation office in central Jakarta and through her house in a neighborhood to the south, where papaya and banana trees grew in the front yard and Javanese dishes like opor ayam were served for dinner. Her guests were leaders in the Indonesian human rights movement, people from women's organizations, representatives of community groups doing grass-roots development.'

It is the above kind of stellar achievement that feminism is made of – a teenage mother who didn't wilt in the face of abandonment, but, on the contrary, went back to school and achieved success on her own terms, not the pampered life of a Hillary Clinton.

Shame on the so-called angry white women. They couldn't have carried the shoes that Obama's mother wore. What would Stanley Ann have thought of their bunch? Disgraceful.

We have claimed 100 per cent of Barack Obama because he has allowed us to do so, though in the final analysis he has nothing to do with how he is defined; the world defined him because he has Black blood in him, disregarding the white blood he also has and the antecedents of how he was raised.

We have claimed 100 per cent of Obama because he has made us proud, becoming the 'first Black man' to be named editor of the Harvard Law Review, marrying one of our most qualified, brilliant and gorgeous Black women, who has proceeded to bear two beautiful children for us.

The politics of race and prejudice has been deliberately thrust into the primary, in the Clinton 'win-at-all-costs' strategy, using surrogates like Geraldine Ferraro. Only the uninformed and bamboozled would fall for it.

Obama has as much claim to being white as we have to claiming 100 per cent of him.

AFRICA NEEDS TOUGH LOVE FROM OBAMA

In 2009, after President Barack Obama took office, there was a frenzy of anticipation in Africa of what 'our son' would do for the continent. Given how Africa had squandered its wealth, my advice to the new president was to show tough love to the continent.

Africans are yet to recover from the pinnacle of euphoria that engulfed them after the election of their 'son', Senator Barack Obama, as President of the United States of America.

It would be insane to argue that Africans were the only ones celebrating: here in America, we know that more than 69.5 million people voted for Obama, a number of whom joined in celebrating his election, apart from the scenes from all over the world showing millions also celebrating this incredible achievement of a 'son' of Africa.

With the euphoria come unrealistic expectations: President Obama will drastically change American policy towards Africa.

However, before we examine these expectations on our part as Africans, we must also examine our part, if any, in making Obama's dreams realisable. Let us, from the outset, acknowledge that Obama's father is an African from Kenya. But, in terms of claiming fatherhood, should we as Africans be proud of a man who abandoned his son when he was barely two years old, forcing his abandoned white wife to resort to food stamps to feed the son he caused to be brought into the world?

I was amazed at the level of celebration in Kenya on Obama's win – declaring national holidays – without so much as expressing any kind of remorse about how their real son, Barack Obama, Sr, had lously mistreated this 'son' of Africa.

The fact we have to reiterate here is that our new president was raised by his single mother, Stanley Ann Dunham, and then mostly by his white grandparents. What has been said above could also be said of African-American claims to Obama: Obama chose to be African-American – okay, forced by his 50 per cent Black blood – after he decided to move to Chicago to become a community organiser. Add to this his marriage to a beautiful, brilliant, high-achieving African-American woman, who has given him two beautiful children, in which case we can say that the African-Americans have better claim to Obama than the nebulous African claim to our 'son'.

In addition, African-Americans voted en masse, 96 per cent, to elect Obama, and contributed massively to his election campaign. Africans cannot make the same claim – okay, my family contributed a

total of \$1 050, and I used the pages of the African Sun Times to promote his candidacy. I have no doubt that others did more, including voting for him. But, on the scale of others, it's a drop in the ocean.

The question really is what Africans and the African continent should realistically expect from the Barack Obama administration. My answer to that is tough love. During the primaries and during the election, it was difficult to discern any specific policy articulated by Obama that would allay our fears or increase our optimism about actions his administration would take, except the generalised opposition to what is going on in Darfur, as well as calling for the ouster of Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe.

There are already some African experts who are expressing fears and sounding alarms about those whom Obama has chosen to head his economic and foreign policy teams. Patrick Bond, director of the Centre for Civil Society, in Durban, is credited with saying, 'One of Barack Obama's leading advisers has done more damage to Africa, its economies and its people than anyone I can think of in world history, including even Cecil John Rhodes.'

Bond was referring to Paul Volcker, whom Obama has picked to head his New Economic Panel. Bond accused Volcker, the Federal Reserve chairman from 1979 to 1987, of increasing 'the cost of African debt precipitously, delivering the newly independent states into at least 20 years of indentured labour'. 'It was after the "Volcker Shock" that Brazil's debt exploded, doubling from \$50 billion to \$100 billion, and that of Nigeria from \$9 billion to \$29 billion,' noted the journalist Naomi Klein, author of *The Shock Doctrine*.¹³

Laurence Summers, the former treasury secretary, who Obama announced will head his Council of Economic Advisers, has been accused of advocating, in a private World Bank memo: 'I think the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that ... I've always thought that under-populated countries in Africa are vastly UNDER-polluted, their air quality is probably vastly inefficiently low ...' The memo suggested that Africa's aesthetic concerns with air pollution are not likely to be as substantive as they are for wealthy northerners.

It should also be recalled that it was during the Clinton administration that Somalia became a failed state, and that the atrocious genocide in Rwanda, which claimed more than 800 000 lives, took place. But it would be an injustice if we failed to acknowledge that it was President Clinton who brought us the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), a successful trade law that was renewed under President Bush.

What should Africans expect from the incoming secretary of state, Senator Hillary Clinton?

And the ambivalence of appreciation and respect shown by African leaders towards Bush, despite American and world condemnation of his policies, is because African leaders have come to believe that the Bush administration has done more for Africa than any other American president. They cite the Millennium Development Goals, although this was a UN initiative, but more specifically the huge amount of money he has allocated towards the HIV/Aids pandemic in Africa.

Africans will be happy if the Obama administration were to equal what Bush has accomplished. But in his first meeting with African leaders, perhaps to address the African Union heads of state meeting, or in a meeting with the Chair of the African Union, President Jakaya Kikwete of Tanzania, President Obama must be brutally frank in telling them that:

1. (1) Africa should look to itself to solve its problems, economically/ financially, politically and culturally, and prevent ethnic wars.
2. (2) Tell the leaders in no uncertain terms that just because a 'son' of Africa is President of the US, it does not mean that the purse strings of the US government are going to be loosened.
3. (3) The foot-dragging among African leaders – many of them afraid of the skeletons in their own cupboards – in ousting dictatorial leaders has to stop. The embarrassing situation in Zimbabwe, where the opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai won the presidential election, only for Mugabe to reverse the result, should not be tolerated. Obama should tell African leaders that it is time for them to abide by the Constitutive Act of the African Union,¹⁴ which calls for the Union to intervene with force, in a situation where the masses of the population are being oppressed. That situation exists today in Zimbabwe.
4. (4) The Obama administration will not tolerate looting of the treasuries by leaders and siphoning those funds to Europe. Obama must also warn European nations to desist from accepting these illegitimate funds, for which there should be serious legal consequences.

President Obama is in a position, as their 'son', to tell African leaders these tough love statements, because he is embarrassed as a Black man that Africa is looked upon as the ignorant child by the rest of the world, incapable of taking care of itself.

It is time for tough love. Obama is very good at that. During the campaign, he chastised Black American leaders for acts unbecoming of good citizenship. It is the same epiphany he has to bring to Africa. Anything less would be a failure of his administration.

13 Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: the rise of disaster capitalism* (Picador, 2007).

14 The Act was adopted in 2000 at the Lomé Summit (Togo), and entered into force in 2001.

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WHO'S A TRUE AFRICAN-AMERICAN?

During Barack Obama's campaign for the Senate in 2004, the Black conservative activist Alan Keyes charged that Obama was not Black enough, because he didn't come from the 'plantation': 'Barack Obama and I have the same race – that is, physical characteristics. We are not from the same heritage.' This issue resurfaced again that year when Professor Lani Guinier, of the Harvard Law School, complained about the number of Africans at Harvard, positions that should have gone to African-Americans.

Former right-wing Republican presidential candidate Alan Keyes, who is grabbing at any straw to lift his drowning, carpet-bagger campaign for the Senate in Illinois, has chosen to fan the flames of inter-cultural bigotry by accusing the Democratic senatorial candidate, Barack Obama, of not being a true enough African-American. Keyes was quoted in a New York Times article of 27 August 2004, titled "‘African-American’ Becomes a Term for Debate", as having said that 'Barack Obama claims an African-American heritage'. Keyes said on the ABC programme *This Week with George Stephanopoulos*: 'Barack Obama and I have the same race – that is, physical characteristics. We are not from the same heritage.' Keyes continued, 'My ancestors toiled in slavery in this country. My consciousness, who I am as a person, has been shaped by my struggle, deeply emotional and deeply painful, with the reality of that heritage.'

It is yet to be understood what former ambassador Keyes meant when he said that he and Obama may have the same 'physical characteristics' but are not from the 'same heritage'. Yet Keyes acknowledges that his 'ancestors toiled in slavery in this country', in effect acknowledging the fact that, if we were to assume the 'slavery' he talks about is that of his African ancestors, both he and Obama might be from the same stock. Why Keyes would want to disown Obama's African-Americanness is beyond comprehension. Obama's father was a Black man from Kenya, who died in 1982. His mother was a white woman from Kansas. It has been drummed into our heads that if your blood is 1 per cent Black, then you are negro/Black/African-American, since the term 'mulatto' has become pejorative, and we are quick to criticise and cast aspersions on individuals who, like Tiger Woods, may want to acknowledge their other ancestors.

So, it becomes a matter of serious concern when, at the height of trying to win a vote, a candidate like Alan Keyes decides to inject this inter-cultural bigotry and question the authentic African-Americanness of Barack Obama. Or would Keyes prefer Obama to disenfranchise

himself by acknowledging his other ancestry to call himself African-White-American so that Keyes could corner the African-American vote and get himself elected to the Senate? What some people will do to get elected is beyond imagination.

Of course, ambassador Keyes is not the first to raise the issue of the yawning divide between immigrant Blacks and native African-Americans. The issue has been raging in the Black community ever since Professor Lani Guinier, a Harvard law professor, and Professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr, the chairman of Harvard's Hutchins Center for African and African-American Research, ignited the controversy at the university's third Black alumni reunion weekend (3-5 October 2003), which was estimated to have drawn more than 600 former students.

According to the Harvard Gazette of January-February 2004, there was a lot of pleased talk at the reunion about the increase in the numbers of Black students, which has 'ballooned' to 530, or about 8 per cent of Harvard's 2003 enrolment. However, the celebratory mood of the evening was broken by Professor Guinier, who charged that the majority – perhaps as many as two-thirds – of the students were not true African-Americans, but West Indian and African immigrants or their children, or, to a lesser extent, children of biracial couples. She was followed by Professor Gates, who supported her charges. Mind you, Professor Guinier's mother is white and her father immigrated from Jamaica.

It is quite pathetic that these highly regarded and prominent Black scholars should be making these kinds of charges rather than extolling the virtues of the immigrant group's impact on the consciousness of the African-American psyche as role models for success. Professor Guinier, the first female Black tenured Harvard professor, it should be recalled, came to public attention in 1993, when President Clinton nominated her to be the first Black woman to head the Civil Rights Division of the Department of Justice and then withdrew her name without a confirmation hearing. Professor Gates has profited immensely from his writings and films about the historic achievements of Africa that were not known before, and we have a lot to thank him for.

Why wouldn't we thank him? For instance, here is how the announcement for his 1999 PBS series on Africa was made: 'For centuries, the history of much of Africa has been hidden from the world, lost to the ravages of time, nature and repressive governments. Now, Harvard University professor Henry Louis Gates, Jr, uncovers an Africa most people never knew existed. In *Wonders of The African World* with Henry Louis Gates Jr., Gates challenges the widespread Western view of Africa as the primitive "dark continent" civilized by white colonists. He shatters myths as he tells the true stories of proud

lands filled with great civilizations, cities and centers of learning long before any Europeans set foot there. He also shares his poignant personal odyssey as an African-American, the great-great-grandchild of slaves, returning to the cradle of Black civilization.'

'I wanted to bring this lost African world into the consciousness of the larger public, Black and white,' says Gates, who is also director of the WEB Du Bois Institute at the Hutchins Center. 'It's important to debunk the myths of Africa being this benighted continent civilised only when white people arrived. In fact, Africans had been creators of culture for thousands of years before. These were very intelligent, subtle and sophisticated people, with organised societies and great art.' It is inconceivable that someone who has praised the accomplishment of his ancestors to the high heavens should turn around to question the zeal with which the children of these ancestors should be pursuing their education in America.

As I pointed out earlier, Professor Guinier's mother is white and her father immigrated from Jamaica. The question then arises as to what *locus standi* does she have for bringing up these charges, since essentially she has been the beneficiary of what she is accusing others of doing? Should the children of immigrant Blacks be discriminated against though they are fully American citizens? My wife is an African-American and I am an African. Why should our children suffer because I am an immigrant to this country; why shouldn't they be accorded the same rights of citizenship as accorded to the first-generation Europeans and Asians?

Can you imagine this type of infantile discussion taking place within the Asian community? Of course not. They are more than welcoming to the new arrivals and do everything to ensure their upward mobility as it benefits their society. It isn't about fighting with or overcoming the new Asian immigrants so that they can progress. They are both progressing together. In the New York Times article I quoted earlier, Dr Bobby Austin, an administrator at the University of the District of Columbia, in Washington, was quoted as saying that 'some people feared that Black immigrants and their children would snatch up the hard-won opportunities made possible by the civil rights movement'. Dr Austin unfortunately goes on to say, 'We've suffered so much that we're a bit weary and immigration seems like one more hurdle we will have to climb. People are asking: "Will I have to climb over these immigrants to get to my dream? Will my children have to climb?"'

Why, why, why? Why should this be the question that African-Americans ask of their Black immigrant brothers and sisters, rather than how Asian immigrants have effectively seized the enrolment at the top colleges of America, without as much as a whimper from

African-American leaders? It is not a question we should be discussing; if we were smart, our focus would be on how the African-Americans could learn and emulate the Black immigrant group to bring sanity to both our collective psyches.

The type of divisive discussion now going on within the Black community will heighten in the next few years as Black immigrants, especially Africans, decide to make their homes in America rather than having one foot in America and the other foot in Africa. It will heighten, especially with the new entrepreneurial class of Africans who are bent on following the same footsteps that other immigrants have followed in climbing the ladder out of the doldrums of economic poverty. It will heighten as the schism widens as to who controls the Black community, as Black immigrants lament the invasion and economic stranglehold of the Black community by other non-Black immigrant groups.

As much as the African-Americans fear the erosion of their perceived gains hatched by Black immigrants, let me categorically state that Black immigrants, be they Africans or West Indians, are not going to stand idly by and let Asian-Americans overwhelmingly seize the minuscule opportunities that white America has thrown to us. They intend to compete. It is a matter of pride.

GIANT NIGERIA EXPERIENCES AMERICA'S TEETHING PROBLEMS

I wrote this article in 1980-81 when I was a foreign policy analyst, especially on the problems facing Nigeria and America. When I read it again, it appeared to me to be xenophobic and inconsiderate of the problems facing our people in the countries that I mentioned, especially the kinds of governments they had inherited, which made them insensitive to the sacrifices that Nigerians had made to liberate them.

They could be found in all parts of Nigeria, going about their business without molestation. They have come from all parts of Africa, some here as students whose fees are wholly paid for by the Nigerian government; some being admitted into university places which are now not even enough for the indigenous Nigerians. Some have come to get the golden fleece – witness the number of Ghanaians in the country. Even their girls are in the process of pushing Nigerian women out of their livelihoods in the oldest profession. We have even been told that many non-Nigerians hold important posts in many parts of the country.

It is not just this melting-pot syndrome that Nigeria takes pride in. Nigerians are proud of having contributed greatly in manpower and in financial and military assistance to other African countries. We are witness to Nigerian legal experts, accounting experts and expert administrators being seconded to East African and even West African countries to help run their governments.

Nigeria takes this leadership role, imposed upon her by sheer size and population, very seriously. Nigeria contributes more than any other country to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and its stellite organisations. Nigeria has contributed more than any country to the African Development Bank and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), without insisting that a Nigerian should always head these organisations.

Nigeria has sent its sons and daughters to fight and die side by side with our African brothers and sisters fighting for the liberation of their countries. We have threatened the illegal racist regime of apartheid South Africa with retaliatory measures if she carries out her threat of molesting and invading any sister states in southern Africa. And the Western world has brought pressure upon apartheid South Africa because of their regard for Nigeria's position in the new world economic and political order.

You would believe, with all the generosity of Nigeria, that its citizens would enjoy the respect of our brothers and sisters who are

beneficiaries of our generosity. But alas, no! Far from it. The feeling in the country is that these countries are ingrates. And the feeling is not without justification.

Recently, Nigerian papers have been filled with accounts of acts of brutality, molestation and downright degradation meted out to Nigeria by our West African neighbours. And of even more concern to Nigerians is the inability and helplessness of our government to solve this wave of anti-Nigerianism by other Africans.

The question is, what should the reaction of the Nigerian government be to countries whose citizens are not appreciative of our generosity, as reflected by the attitude of their citizens towards our own citizens? Should we invade these countries, expel their citizens from Nigeria or, to follow Colonel Gaddafi's example with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), simply cut off aid to these countries? What should we do without throwing our weight around? The mere mention of 'throwing our weight around' seems to immobilise our government.

Nigeria's present problem, of not having a clear-cut policy of how to respond to the irritating attitude of our neighbours, has been the same predicament suffered by the United States since the end of the Second World War.

America invested billions of dollars under its Marshall Plan to rehabilitate the European economies after the war. The respective countries have achieved such spectacular economic growth that they now pose a threat to America's economic survival. An example is West Germany, whose economic growth and attendant reaping of several billions in foreign exchange reserves has been helping to devalue the American dollar. West Germany is even in a much stronger military position to threaten the rest of Europe than it was before the Second World War. Hence, nowadays, they have found it expedient not to dance to the tune of every drum beaten by America.

The perennial sick man of Europe – France – which benefited heavily from America's generosity both during and after the Second World War, is the first to thumb its nose at America and its NATO allies. It takes great delight in flouting every major move by America to check Soviet aggressive expansionism in Europe, whether it is in strengthening NATO defences or boycotting the Moscow Olympics. France is always the first to say no.

Or is it Japan that we should talk about? Japan lost the war, but has won the economic battle against its conqueror – America. Poor America is now on its knees begging the Samurai Princess not to deliver the coup de grâce. Over 240 000 automobile workers are out of work in America due to the aggressive export policies of Japanese automobile makers. Chrysler, America's third-largest automobile

maker, is on the brink of bankruptcy because Americans are snapping up Japanese cars – to the tune of over a quarter of all cars sold in America last year. And you can hardly find a black and white television set made in America, since the Japanese have totally cornered that market.

You would think that, with all this generosity on the part of America, the Japanese would reciprocate. But Japan has one of the most protectionist trade policies of any major country in the world, preferring to sell to other countries while preventing its citizens from using products made outside the country. Just look at Nigeria's trade imbalance with Japan!

What should have been the response of a country whose mentor had done so much for it? Gratitude, yes? But no, not Japan. Japan was the first country to break America's attempt to embargo purchases of Iranian oil following the seizure of the American diplomats in Teheran in November of last year (1979).

The so-called Banana Republics in South America are the first to shout 'Yankee imperialism' and 'Gringo, go home' when they indulge in their perennial game of government-changing. Despite the enormous aid lavished on these countries, the United States must tread carefully as the big brother in its dealings with other member states in the Organization of American States (OAS). It must not give the impression of bullying its neighbours.

And even coming near home, to the Third World countries, the ambivalent feeling of ingratitude is noticeable among those who receive aid from America. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which has done much through its scholarship funds to produce the present crop of its critics, is regarded as a spy organisation. Yet this organisation has made it possible to bring water to many villages, eradicate unhealthy environments and improve agricultural productivity in Third World countries. Yet, the immediate beneficiaries of the charity of this organisation are the first to tell us what a rotten organisation it is.

It is the pastime of many students and so-called liberal intellectuals in Third World countries to blame everything on American imperialism and to see everything virtuous in whatever communist Russia does. While Nigeria is beginning to experience the same helplessness that America does in its predicament, all is quiet on the Russian front.

The question we must therefore ask ourselves is how Russia has been able to prevent this waywardness on the part of its allies and aid recipients. Of course, we can adduce several reasons here. But from recent events in Afghanistan and old events in Czechoslovakia, one important equation in Russia's success is the ruthlessness with which

it has always dealt with a misbehaving ally.

Unlike America, which has let the mouths it fed bite its hands, the Soviet Union has ensured that the satellite countries in the Warsaw Pact do not have the same luxury of opportunity as their American counterparts to create problems, either economically or politically, for their mentor. Every day, there are reminders to these unfortunate countries of how Russia saved them from the evil forces of Nazi German imperialism.

Unlike Japan and West Germany, none of Russia's satellite nations can boast of having surpassed their mentor in economic terms. They must be content with buying useless and obsolete Russian industrial equipment. And while Russia spends millions buying grain from America, its satellite countries even have to pay more for the same products. Of course, if there was freedom of expression, as exists here in Nigeria, at least we would be able to know whether those subjugated nations agree with Soviet expansionism in Europe and Asia.

However, what is so amazing is the double standard of the so-called intellectuals in the Third World countries. They would not have been as vocal if it had been America rather than Russia that invaded Afghanistan. Granted that the Warsaw Pact countries are not in a position to do anything about Russian foreign policy, at least we in the Third World should not let the Russians forget that we, as an oppressed people, cannot sit by and let the human rights of the citizens of another country be trampled upon, whether the trampling comes from Russia, America or any other superpower.

As we have demonstrated here, America and Nigeria are in the same predicament. The two countries are being generous to other countries less fortunate, yet these countries treat Nigerians and Americans with contempt and irreverence. These two countries are worried about throwing their weight around.

The manner with which Nigeria solves these minor problems of molestation and abuse of our citizens by other countries will determine the extent of the respect that it will ultimately enjoy in the future.

I therefore challenge our destitute intellectual snobs of the Institute of International Affairs to devise what clear-cut policies Nigeria should pursue that, without seeming to throw our weight around, would in no uncertain terms drive home Nigeria's strong feelings to our aid recipients.

In the case of the Nigeria Airways crew who were recently held captive for over 20 hours at Robertsfield International Airport in Liberia, what would be Nigeria's reaction have been if, for some reason, the crew had not been released? Should we send in our crack

1st Infantry Division to teach the 'Banana Republic' – or rather the 'Rubber Republic' – a lesson?' Should we blacklist the country, together with Israel and racist South Africa, as countries not fit to receive our liquid gold – oil. Or do we meet offence with offence, by arresting the same number of Liberians and holding them as long as Nigerians are held?

Open societies create the seeds of their own destruction. The United States has the right to invade Iran and secure the release of the 49 American hostages held in that country. But it would not do so because of the reaction of its citizens and the reaction of the entire world in general.

A ruthless foreign policy, such as that practised by Russia, is only possible by denying fundamental human rights and freedom of expression to citizens. Another prerequisite for such a foreign policy requires that the allies of such a country must be economically and politically controlled, and their views, if expressed publicly, not allowed to deviate from those pursued by the mentor.

Nigeria, at the present time, enjoys a high measure of democracy and a high degree of freedom of expression. And it seems we will continue to grope along in our relations with our unfortunate neighbours. And, unfortunately, innocent citizens of this country will continue to be the losers because we must not be thought of as throwing our weight around.

The challenge has been thrown to our ivory-towered foreign policy advisers and the effete snobs of intellectual international experts to devise a foreign policy that will save the citizens of this country further embarrassment at the hands of our 'ungrateful' aid recipients.

But anybody who suggests a Russian type of ruthless kamikaze foreign policy needs his head examined or to be banished to Russia's Siberia, where he must join deviant thinkers of his ilk.

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